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THE
ROGOZEN
TREASURE

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HIDDEN TO BE FOUND

The numbers correspond to the way the items are listed in the catalogue for the exhibition of the Thracian treasure from Rogozen at the British Museum, 1986.



THE LAND OF TREASURES

“Now we move on to Thrace and examine the most 9
powerful tribes in Europe.” This is how the author Solinus
long ago began his description of the Thracians. These
barbarians inhabited an enormous territory between the
Aegean Sea, the Carpathian mountains and the rivers Ti-
mok and Dniepr. Herodotus considered them to be the
world’s most numerous people after the natives of India.
Ancient writings portrayed them either as brave warriors
defying death, or as fervent worshippers of the gods. This
position between Ares (Mars) and Orpheus characterizes
the ideology of a primitive society in which aristocratic
valour was the principal value and ideal. The founder of
the Odrysian kingdom Teres declared that he “began to
resemble his grooms when he was not fighting” and He-
rodotus summed up the Thracians’ “remarkable” idea of
a happy life as “to sit idle and live from wars and plunder-
ing is considered desirable while to plough the land is
most dishonourable.”

As people in Ancient Greece listened to Plato and Aristotle,
watched plays by Sophocles and Euripides, and admired
statues by Phidias and Praxiteles, Thrace still echoed to
the clashes of epic heroes’ weapons and groans from giants
struck down by the gods. The two nations seemed to be
in different epochs: the Greeks studied science and nature,
while the Thracians lived in a world of mythology. The
Greeks were transforming myths into literature, but for
the Thracians legends were still reality. These differences
took shape around the 6th century BC, and coincided with

the fast development of the Greek state. Until then the two nations that belonged to the Indo-European linguistic, cultural and ethnic group shared a Palaeo-Balkan cultural heritage and developed along parallel lines. A geometric artistic style evolved in both lands and Homer praised works by Thracian artists. Gold and silver objects began to predominate in Thracian burials towards the end of the 6th century BC. The Greeks did not follow this trend illustrating the growing social differentiation and changes in ideology. The Thracian aristocracy were on the threshold of more stable state structures and felt the need to emphasize its rule, and create new insignia, regalia and codes, which would adapt myths and rituals to the royal ideology. These requirements brought about the flourishing of art in Ancient Thrace.

Embossed metalwork was the principal area of Thracian artistry. Articles of precious metals are typical of Thracian tombs and treasures. These luxury items were signs of prestige as well as mere wealth: they denoted rank and social standing, distinguishing their owners (the aristocracy) from ordinary members of the tribe. We tend to adopt modern monetary attitudes towards ancient wealth, wondering why, even in the most critical situations, ancient leaders would not sell their treasures, but sought other ways out of the crisis. One good example is the owner of the Panagyurishtë gold treasure which weighed 8.5 kilogrammes. He could have hired an army of 500 well-trained mercenaries for one year for the price of the metal alone. Although he (probably the Odrysian ruler Seuthes III) was waging difficult wars against Lysimachos, he did not part with the precious vessels. They were apparently worth more to him than their financial or utilitarian value.

The human labour and natural resources that were invested in the gold and silver Thracian treasures are almost unimaginable. But this wealth never entered economic life, never stimulated the country's economic and social development. It remained locked away in the king's palace or tomb. Thracian gold had its roots in mythology. The ancient kings tried to emulate the mythical rulers who

always possessed untold riches. Every royal object in mythology was made of gold, even when this was impractical (such as Achilles' gold shield). All royal artifacts served as insignia including Thracian jewellery and accessories, vessels, decorative horse-harnesses and armour. These objects demonstrated royal wealth, but they also had an ideological value: rulers had to be rich if their kingdoms were to flourish: their treasure was a sign and guarantee of the affluence of ordinary people.

Gold was also associated with after-life, where everything was golden. This world was separated from ours by a river of gold which could only be crossed with help from some magic gold object or by riding an animal made out of the precious metal. Gold must therefore have been regarded as a cosmic mediator helping to surmount the boundaries between different worlds and lives. This is why every object intended to play a role in the transition ritual was gilded, raising its status and sanctity. The gilded object facilitated the passage from one world to another. Gold items became royal insignia and symbols of divine power because the metal was assumed to come from the world of gods. These items resulted from the transformation of a natural resource into art. It is therefore no surprise that all royal treasures discovered in Thrace contain only gold and silver.

II

In July 1985 the villager Ivan Dimitrov found a silver vessel as he was digging a ditch to irrigate his garden. At first he did not realize the importance of his find. He even thought it was some useless old container his neighbour had thrown over his fence. It was later revealed that the object was a Thracian phiale bearing the longest inscription discovered so far. Dimitrov was in no hurry to report his find, which eventually totalled 65 silver vessels. He was afraid that archaeologists would invade his garden and prevent him from harvesting his crops. Eventually, on January 5, 1986, he told the village mayor, who immediately got in touch with the Archaeological Museum in Vratsa. The archaeologists Bogdan Nikolov, Spas Mashov and Plamen Dimitrov soon arrived in Rogozen and, despite the bitter cold, started excavations at once. Bogdan Niko-

lov could not believe his eyes: he had never seen so many phialae and jugs in one place, even though he is known as one of Bulgaria's most successful archaeologists. Experience told him that he was holding in his hands the greatest Thracian discovery to date. But even he could not have guessed that they would soon unearth a second collection of silver vessels, bringing the total of objects found to an incredible 165. The mass media soon found out and dubbed the treasure "the find of the century".

12 The treasure's fame was to spread. As early as January 7, 1986, Nikolov organized an exhibition of the Rogozen silver in the Vratsa Museum. The exhibition was opened with a press conference which was attended by the most outstanding Bulgarian thracologists. Soon afterwards Nikolov released the first thorough description of the treasure. A comprehensive account of the find appeared in *Izkoustvo* magazine only five months after the discovery. The first half of 1986 was rather hectic for Thracology: several seminars were held at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences Institute of Thracology involving heated exchanges. The exhibition transferred to Sofia. Then in September 1986 it went to Moscow, where a Bulgarian-Soviet seminar was held. After Moscow the silver was shown in Leningrad. In December 1986 it was exhibited in the British Museum in London becoming one of its main attractions. A Bulgarian-British symposium was held in March 1987 and new ideas about Thracian culture were advanced. The Rogozen treasure has been the focus of numerous studies over the past three years which has been a substantial contribution to Thracology.

Visitors to the exhibitions have been amazed at the number and variety of vessels, the abundance of inscriptions and the decorative images and scenes. The new find did not catch Bulgarian scholars unawares. They had already studied 15 large collections unearthed in Thracian lands, plus the rich content of many burial grounds in the present-day lands of Bulgaria, Romania and the USSR. Thracology had already developed methods and techniques for reconstructing Thracian culture. Even the exceptional Rogozen treasure only added new elements to the existing picture,

without changing it radically. The discovery enabled researchers to settle a number of issues that had hitherto been the subject of debate, such as the interpretation of inscriptions and different scenes and images in Thracian art, the existence of local workshops, etc. The prompt publicity about the Rogozen treasure and the rich reward given to its finder brought unexpected benefits: several very valuable objects that had been kept by their discoverers were offered to museums. For example, one appliqué, one phiale and one jug were added to the Loukovit treasure that had been unearthed in 1952.

The village of Rogozen is in northwestern Bulgaria, a territory inhabited long ago by the Thracian tribe, Tribal-
loi. In ancient historiography the Triballoi have been
known since the 4th century BC, although their lands had
been an important centre of culture since prehistoric times. Bogdan Nikolov has excavated settlements near Gradesh-
nitsa and Krivodol, which have made an important con-
tribution to the study of Chalcolithic culture in the Bal-
kans. He also investigated Early Bronze Age burial mounds
near Tarnava and Knezha, as well as late Bronze and Early
Iron Age finds, the most significant among them being the
necropolis near the village of Sofronievo. Cultural life in
the region flourished again in the 4th century BC, illustrat-
ed by the rich content of the Mogilanska Mogila burial
mound, the treasures from Boukyovtsi and similar finds
from Vladinya, Loukovit, Radyuvené and Letnitsa. The
tradition continued during the Late Hellenistic Age, from
when the treasures from Yakimovo and Galiché are dated.
Against this background, the Rogozen treasure was not so
unexpected.

The valuable buried objects or "treasures" are typical of the northern Thracian lands and date from the Late Bronze Age. North of the river Danube treasures have been found at Borodino (the USSR), Perssinari, Ostrovul Mare and Sakosul Mare (Romania), etc. However, the famous Vulchitrin treasure, containing 12.5 kilogrammes of gold vessels, was found to the south of the Danube. These collections consist of a variety of objects: jewellery, ornamental daggers and vessels. The tradition of burying riches continued

throughout the Early Iron Age: an example is the strange discovery near Sofia of three vessels of bronze, clay and gold, which fitted one into the other. The well-known treasure from Sheremet includes geometric silver jewellery. Finds from the subsequent period are even more impressive as they consisted of numerous precious objects. Vessels predominate in treasures from the villages of Borovo, Alexandrovo, Boukyovtsi, Radyuvené, Rogozen, and the town of Panagyurishtë. Other collections, such as that from Loukovit, include vessels and ornamental horse-harnesses, while a third group (from Letnitsa and possibly also Craiova (Romania) consists of appliqués for horse-harnesses.

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The abundance of treasures often prompts the question: what made the owners bury them? The traditional or “historical” answer attributes the practice to the stormy military and political situation in the Balkans: local leaders would flee from an impending invasion, after hiding their wealth, then they probably perished and the buried valuables remained buried. But a powerful ruler must have owned more than one collection of riches. What happened to the other treasures? Another consideration is that all treasures, apart from Panagyurishtë’s, were found to the north of the Haemus mountain. But Southern Thracian rulers also suffered defeat. So why did they not bury their wealth? Why did none of the treasures dating from the Classical and Early Hellenistic periods contain jewellery? The Rogozen treasure raised all these questions poignantly, forcing researchers to look for new answers.

The Rogozen treasure led to further questions such as how was the royal treasure accumulated? Bulgarian archaeologists already have a clearer idea of the ways a precious object found its way into the royal treasury. By comparing the forms, decoration, imagery and specific style of the Rogozen objects with other Thracian finds, it is possible to reconstruct the trends and changes in cultural relations both within Thrace, and between Thrace and neighbouring states. This has enriched our detailed knowledge of Thracian culture, particularly its mythology, rituals and art. This pictorial language became the key to understand-

ing Thracian spiritual and cultural life. It introduced substantial alterations to written evidence of ancient authors. This complementary source material enables a more successful reconstruction of the real Thracian contribution to ancient culture. The Rogozen treasure is playing an important role in this reconstruction.

Despite local differences, ancient culture developed as a unified process owing to close links among the ethnic communities. The new treasure is the meeting place of Eastern and Greek works of art. Other vessels illustrate how Greek portraiture was reinterpreted by local artisans, while a third class of objects show universal ornamental configurations. With every new discovery the pattern of the ancient world's artistic evolution is becoming increasingly clear. This explains the extreme interest of archaeologists from all over the world in the treasure from Rogozen. The new data provides a more convincing answer to Thracologists and to those other scientists studying ancient times.

16



1

*The Vulchitrun treasure,
15th—12th century BC*

2

*The Vratsa treasure,
mid-4th century BC*



18



3

*The Borovo treasure,
early 4th century BC*

4

*The Panagyurishtë treasure,
late 4th century BC*



20



5

*The Letnitsa treasure,
mid-4th century BC*

6

*Rhyton featuring Pegasus,
Razgrad region, 4th century BC*





7
*The discovery of the second part
of the Rogozen treasure, January 6, 1986*
8
Part of the Rogozen treasure





PHIALAE AND JUGS

Phialae are the most common ornamental vessels found in Thracian lands. Before the Rogozen treasure was discovered, about 50 mesomphalos type phialae had been uncovered: they were shallow or deeper cups, with a navel-like bump at the bottom. The new find trebled the number of known phialae adding 108 to the collection. Sofia's National History Museum presently contains as many silver and gold phialae as the rest of the world's museums put together. The Rogozen treasure will help categorize and date the phialae and show their circulation routes in the ancient world. 27

The earliest Thracian phiale dates from the end of the 7th century BC. It was found by Bogdan Nikolov at a Thracian necropolis near the village of Sofronievo (not far from Rogozen). Although made of bronze and totally devoid of decoration, the phiale started a centuries-long trend. The silver phiale from the village of Moushovitsa and a fragment from a similar cup date from the end of the 6th century BC. They are decorated with raised almond shapes which later became one of the principal motifs in Thracian embossed metalwork. Of particular interest is the shallow gold phiale from the village of Daskal Atanassovo. Its ornamentation is analogous to finds from Phrygia in Asia Minor, although the Daskal Atanassovo cup is from a much later period. The remaining Thracian phialae date mainly from the 4th century BC, the period when the Rogozen treasure was accumulated.

The Odrysian Input

Fifteen Rogozen phialae display stippled inscriptions in Greek. Several other inscribed vessels had already been found (five phialae and three rhytons). All inscriptions contain identical words: the name of the Odrysian ruler in the genitive possessive grammatical case, the preposition *ex* (also appearing as *ek*, *eg* and *e*) meaning “from”, and a place name in the genitive case. The most common phrase, appearing on eight vessels, is: *KOTYOS EX BEO*. Going by the errors in the inscriptions, the metalsmiths were not very familiar with the Greek language. All names belong to Odrysian rulers whose lands were south of the

28 Haemus mountain; place names in the inscriptions refer to Odrysian fortified settlements around the Sea of Marmara. Phialae providing this information are the nucleus of the Odrysian part of the Rogozen treasure as they definitely entered the Triballian kings’ treasury from the opposite end of Thrace. Comparative analysis attributes several more Rogozen phialae to this nucleus.

The Odrysian workshop produced a series of undecorated cups (phialae 27, 28, 40, 42 and 46), for which there are parallels in cups discovered earlier (at Agighiol, Dobrou-dja, and Mogilanska Mogila). The earliest phialae in this group are 27, dating from around 425 BC and bearing the name of the Odrysian prince Satokos, and 32. Both vessels are cast, with carefully polished inner and outer surfaces. In contrast, the phialae from Apros are rather roughly made. The size and shape of phialae 34 and 36 indicate they are part of a later trend in embossed metalwork.

Another major series of phialae in the Rogozen treasure are decorated with engraved fluted shapes whose rounded tips join to form a figure resembling the Greek letter lambda (λ). Two of these phialae (44 and 46) originate from Ergiske, but are inscribed with the names of two different rulers: Kotys and his son Kersebleptes. Despite the minor differences in their decoration, the two phialae were apparently made by the same artist. A variety of this decoration is reflected in phialae 45, 47 and 53 which have long, narrow fluted shapes connected by a lambda at their tips. Phialae 45 and 47 bear the place name Geistai, 53 is

not inscribed. The famous cup from the village of Alexandrovo can be added to this group as it bears the same place name, as does phiale 104 from Rogozen.

Phiale 42 also mentions Kotys from Ergiske. Its decoration differs sharply from the familiar style of Odrysian artists. It is covered by large lotus blossom petals rendered in low relief, alternating with almonds in high relief pointing towards the centre. A stamen made from small almond shapes can be seen in the triangular space between the petals of the lotus blossom. In Heinz Luschey's study this type of decoration has parallels among early specimens from Ashur. Early phialae found in Bulgarian lands (such as from the village of Moushovitsa) are also of this type. Very similar to the Rogozen phiale is a 6th century BC Achaemenidean cup currently in a Tokyo museum. Comparative analysis shows that phiale 42 contains fewer archaic elements, which dates it from the 5th century BC. An image of Apollo was soldered on to the omphalos, a raised bump at the bottom of the cup. The same stamp was used to emboss the image on to the omphali of phialae 101—103, indicating that the three cups were made in the same Odrysian workshop. Phiale 42 appears to have entered the Odrysian treasury as a gift, tax or booty, as it was the work of Achaemenidean metalsmiths (like the silver amphora from Koukova Mogila burial mound). This is a curious example of Thracian artisans' secondary treatment of a foreign object. They added the ritual formula and stamped the image of the deity worshipped by the Thracian ruler on the omphalos, adapting the imported cup to the requirements of local culture.

29

Phiale 86 has a characteristic decoration on its bottom: eight elongated raised almonds fan out from a circle at the centre. They are set against a background of diamond shapes. Diamond shapes are typical of the oldest phialae (Ashur, Gordion and Kellermes). Similar decoration can also be seen on the cup from the village of Branichevo, dedicated to the Odrysian ruler Amatokos. The cup resembles one of the Rogozen phialae. The radial decoration (also referred to as a "wheel") is characteristic of later phialae and is probably a reflection of the popular Mace-

donian symbol. Therefore phiale 86 could be dated from the mid-4th century BC.

About 25 phialae in the Rogozen treasure were made in the workshops of the Odrysian kings. This high proportion indicates the extensive political and cultural contacts between different Thracian kingdoms.

The "Abderan Booty"

30 In 376 BC the Triballoi crossed the Haemus mountain and descended to the Aegean coast, where they besieged and devastated the area around the Greek colony of Abdera. This campaign was possibly undertaken in alliance with the Odrysae, whose ruler Kotys I waged permanent war against the Greeks along the Aegean coast. The march against Abdera coincided with the accumulation of the Triballoi royal treasure which included the riches from the village of Boukyovtsi and offerings in the Mogilanska Mogila burial mound. It is feasible that the Rogozen phialae of indisputable Greek origin were part of the booty of the Triballian ruler Chales. This notion "Abderan booty" is tentative and covers all Greek valuables in the Rogozen treasure.

Phiale 2 is the oldest vessel in the treasure. This type of wide shallow cup was well known in the ancient world and is mirrored by many specimens from various epochs which permits the Rogozen phiale to be dated. A frieze of ten broad almonds, alternating with lotus blossoms, is raised around a gilded centre. This is an old Eastern decorative motif (the oldest example is from Ialissos on Rhodes and dates from around 650 BC). Most similar to the Rogozen phiale, even in size, are three cups found in Kozani, Chalkidike and Sindos. They date from around 500 BC based on other aspects of the burials and an inscription on the first one. Approximately the same date should probably be given to the Rogozen phiale as well.

Phiale 81 is a vessel of this type, probably dating from the late 5th or early 4th century BC. The cup from Agighiol also indicates the popularity of phialae belonging to this group.

Phialae were originally Eastern vessels, so the decorative

motifs are expected to follow Oriental patterns. The combination of almonds and palm leaves on phiale 82 is typical of earlier Persian vessels. This is one of the most magnificently decorated and technically exquisite of all phialae found so far in Thrace.

Phiale 97 is similar, with rich decoration concentrated round the centre and on the bottom. The four pairs of opposing horned lions and griffins are of Oriental origin, but their rendering betrays the hand of a Greek artist.

One of the masterpieces of ancient embossed metalwork is the vessel which can only arbitrarily be called a phiale (4). It is so shallow that it is unlikely to have been used for drinking. An emblem with the images of Auge and Heracles is soldered on the inside at the bottom. The artist must have been familiar with the Greek artistic style as the figures are expressive and portray a dramatic scene. This is probably one of the latest vessels in the treasure. The name of its owner, DIDYKAIMOS, is stippled on the rim.

31

With its simple, regular and elegant decoration, phiale 1 betrays the steady hand of a Greek artist. This large cup, which is a Greek type of phiale, is exactly paralleled in shape, size and ornamentation by an earlier find from the village of Radyuvené.

Careful comparison of size, shape, decoration and standard of work helped differentiate the Rogozen phialae into several more groups which could be attributed to different workshops. Many have direct analogies in previously-studied Thracian cups, which suggests they should be attributed to local workshops to the north of the Haemus mountain.

The Triballian Rulers' Workshop

The workshop is represented by five phialae (88—92) with identical dimensions, shape and decoration. On the shoulders there are inverted ovolo decorations with dots; at the broadest part of each vessel is a band of short horizontal and overlapping ovolo, and on the bottom there is fluting widening towards the top and alternating with narrower flutes pointing downwards. This general decorative pattern

also applies to several jugs (120, 132, 133, 139—142 and possibly also 124—131 and 134—138). The earliest known product of this workshop is the fragmented jug from the village of Boukyovtsi, found not far from Rogozen. In all, 25 vases should be attributed to the Triballian metalsmiths.

These three principal groups are the nucleus of the Rogozen phialae. But several smaller ensembles have also been identified, namely: 38, 55 and 70; 52, 72, 77, 78 and 108; 61, 66, 73, 74, 80 and 85; 54, 57, 58, 67 and 75; 71 and 79; 39 and 51; 87 and 93; 63 and 64; 59 and 60; and 94 and 95.

- 32 The enormous number of phialae in the Rogozen treasure demands more general conclusions about the manufacturing and function of this type of vessel in ancient Thrace. It has become clear that they were made in workshops attached to the royal treasury. The artists were not independent workers; they worked to the order of and with materials provided by the local ruler. Their production appeared in series, repeating particular shapes and decorations. The vessels were often similar in weight as the artists' moulds apparently corresponded to the amount of metal the local ruler could afford. The workshops did not specialize in phialae alone. They manufactured jugs and a number of decorative elements to give a common design theme to horse-harnesses, rhytons, skyphoi, jewellery and accessories. The popularity of the phialae in everyday life and in Thracian rituals is proved by their frequent appearance in Thracian art. They are always present in depictions of investitures, when gods hand power to the ruler. Phialae became royal insignia and were used during feasts, the principal form of communication between the ruler, his attendants, guests and friends. The widespread use of drinking vessels in Thrace seems to support the ancient authors' claims that the Thracians were partial to drinking; even women drank undiluted wine (a barbarian custom in the eyes of the Greeks). Feasts were a special form of social contact, not just a pretext for satisfying vices. The moralizing attitude of Greek and Roman authors could not fully explain Thracian customs and rituals or

those of other barbarians. These inexplicable actions to modern eyes stemmed from the requirements of barbarian ideology. It is difficult to differentiate between the phialae' and jugs' purely practical and ritual functions because the archaic consciousness found it hard to distinguish the profane from the sacred. The same vessel could serve different purposes in different situations.

Before the Rogozen treasure was discovered, only 15 jugs had been found on Thracian lands. The new find contained another 54, coming second in popularity to the phialae. The phialae and jugs probably formed a set during the feasts; in other situations the phiale was combined with a rhyton. Wine was poured from the jug in the phiale, hence its Greek name *oinochoe*. The earliest Greek silver jugs date from the 6th century BC. Most had an egg-shaped body set on a wider base. Their handles were attached by some floral ornament or figure. The handles of the earlier jugs were raised high above the rim, and were not flat, as in vessels dating from the 4th century BC. Jugs were another characteristic of Persian culture. Thracian jugs outnumber all others found so far in the ancient world. Two jugs (118 and 112) definitely have an Odrysian origin because both are inscribed with the names of Odrysian rulers — Satokos and Kotys respectively. The body of the first jug is covered with horizontal fluting. This is a relatively rare decorative pattern; vertical fluting is more common. It also appears on the cup from the Boukyovo treasure and on the Borovo rhyton, both finds from Thracian lands. Horizontal fluting betrays a preference for Achaemenidean models, which is particularly relevant as phiale 42 is of Persian origin. A direct parallel is found in the jug from the Oxus treasure. It may be slightly older than the Rogozen jug, but the name "Satokos" dates the Rogozen jug reliably to the second half of the 5th century BC. This Odrysian prince is also named on phiale 27. We therefore have a tableware set of a Thracian aristocrat. The second jug is cast, heavy and large, with a tri-fluted rim resembling the typical Greek wine vessel. It was probably imported from Greece, as its egg-shape with no base had no parallel in local production. This jug was likely to

have formed a set with phialae 42 and 101—103, because the name of Apollo is inscribed on its rim, and the god's image appears at the centres of the phialae.

Ten jugs have the same decorative motif: raised leaves which turn outwards at the top. A similar decoration is also seen on the jug from the village of Rozovets, which probably dates from the end of the 5th century BC as it has no base. A similar jug from Pithom is in New York's Brooklyn Museum. An identical vessel to the Rogozen jugs was discovered in summer 1986 in a burial mound near the town of Svilengrad (on ancient Odrysae territory). The Derveni jug is a later specimen with richer decoration.

- 34 These are obviously examples from the same group of jugs. It may be assumed that four out of the ten Rogozen jugs in question, 143 and 145—147, were imported into the Triballian treasury, possibly as gifts from Odrysian rulers. The rest are local imitations as they betray a lack of understanding of the original floral motifs.

The third large group of jugs were made in the Triballian kings' workshops mentioned above. They can be divided into three series with different dimensions, weight and minor decorative elements, probably produced by different metalsmiths.

The next group contains five similarly proportioned jugs which are relatively heavy with a very low base, broad body and short neck (127, 128, 116, 122 and 158). The main decorative motif is narrow alternating almonds.

Thracian artists put more mythological motifs on jugs than on phialae. This enables a pictorial and stylistic comparison with other works of Thracian art, and offers a way for finding out more about trends in Thracian embossed metalwork in different workshops. An excellent example is jug 155 which is decorated with symmetrical figures of two goddesses riding lionesses. The horn of the rhyton from Poroina contains a similar composition of two female mirror images, barefoot, dressed in the same long chitons and with like features. The face of the goddess resembles the style of the image on the skyphos from the town of Strelcha. These works of art almost certainly originated in the same workshop, probably located near the Tribaloi

treasury. The riders in the hunting scene on jug 159 clearly resemble hunters on the appliquéés from the Letnitsa treasure, and the heroes depicted on the helmets from Agighiol and Baiceni (Romania). The two chariots flying towards each other suggest a connection between jug 157 and the gold jug found in the Mogilanska Mogila burial mound and demonstrate the existence of permanent pictorial motifs in the Triballoi workshop. Jug 154 is particularly interesting because it features a Greek scene in which the artist has tried to imitate the images and the style of the prototype. However, both the muscles and the figures' movements are rendered schematically, compared with any Greek original from the 4th century BC. The most interesting jugs in the Rogozen treasure have their proper place in Thracian art; they enrich existing knowledge of how this art evolved, without changing it essentially.

35

The large goblet (165) can also be classified among well known Thracian finds. It belongs to a series of similar cups from Agighiol and Iron Gates (currently kept in New York's Metropolitan Museum). This raises the question about the real origin of the Iron Gates find, whether it originated from a plundered Triballian burial mound or treasure. The Rogozen vessel slightly differs in style from the rest: the animal figures are less geometric, the ornamentation is richer and there are traces of gilding. These cups had a common prototype in vessels from northwestern Persia, dated from between 1000 and 500 BC. The goblets from Trebeniste (Macedonia) are the earliest examples of these vessels in the Balkans, indicating the routes of the ancient culture's expansion. Later, in the 5th century BC, it occurred again in cups from the village of Dulboki (at present kept in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford and in Leningrad's Hermitage).

There is no doubt that the Rogozen find will help researchers assess more accurately the classification, propagation and origin of the two principal types of artifacts: phialae and jugs. Who can guess how much wine was drunk out of these 165 vessels, in how many rites they were used, and how much envy and respect they inspired among the aristocrats sharing the table of their royal

host — the ruler of the Triballoi? He entrusted his riches to the earth. Barely uncovered, they still shone with the extravagance that blinded the king's table-companions 2500 years ago. They were probably part of that wealth which gave the Thracian aristocracy the name *zibitides* or "shining".

36 This name is not the pure metaphor it appears to be. Its roots should be sought in mythological notions. The supreme Indo-European deities (such as Zeus and Hera) were symbolized by light and luminance. The epic heroes playing a sacred role in the primitive society shared these divine qualities too. Indian, Persian, Greek and German sources speak about them as being "brilliant", refer to their "bright" or "shining" faces, and attribute to them a "blazing stare" or "luminous beauty". However, the epic tradition reflected aristocratic valour. This is why the earthly nobility assumed the heroes' characteristics: Thracian aristocrats were described as "brilliant", as were the Scandinavian jarls.

This mythical association of the hero-king with light was also coded through material features. Special attention should be devoted to the use of colour. Indo-Europeans denoted priests by white garments; for example, the Getae priests wore white. The ruler's sacredness was also denoted by white; royal horses were always white (for example, the horses harnessed to the chariot of the mythical Edonian ruler Rhesus, the horses stolen from the Thracians for the sacred chariot of the Persian god Ahura-Mazda, and the two studs of white horses given by Kotys I as his daughter's dowry). As with other Indo-European peoples, a direct ideological connection existed for the Thracians between royal power and fire. Ancient authors provided evidence about a kind of fire investiture which a future ruler faced in the temple of Dionysus: if the deity accepted the applicant, flames rising "to the sky" blazed on the altar when libations with wine were performed on it. Fire represented the Sun. The Thracians' solar cult existed from the end of the Bronze Age: solar symbols are found in the ornamentation on ceramic vessels and in the enormous circles cut into the vertical cliffs of the eastern

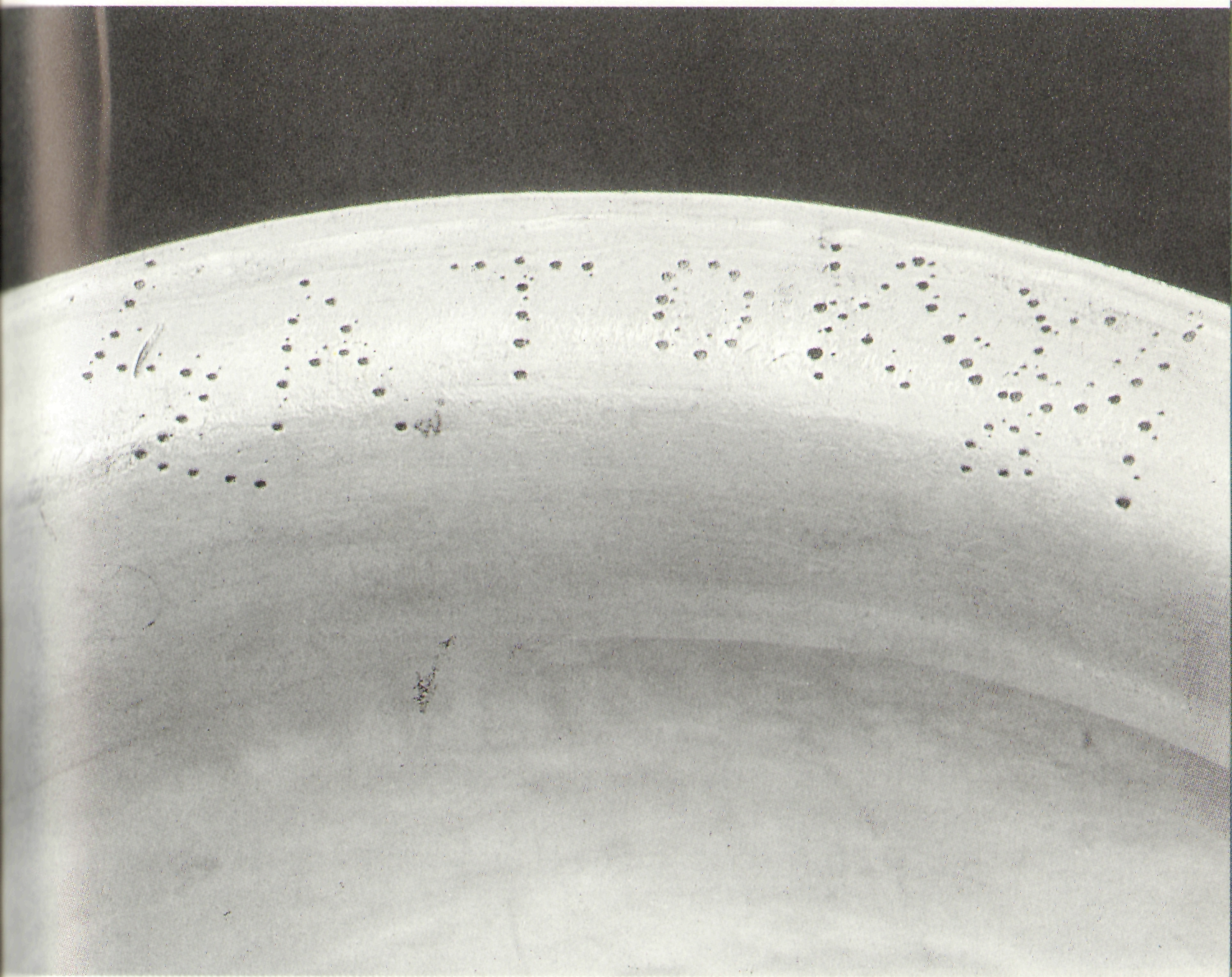
Rhodopes. These practices are also reflected in mythology about Orpheus. This legendary Thracian singer, priest and king was the first to start worshipping the Sun and calling it Apollo. Every morning he walked to the mountain's peak to welcome the Sun's first rays. Is it strange then that Apollo became his mythical father? Thracian Orpheus-Apollo cults may therefore have included Sun worship. As we have already seen, these cults also had a prominent place in royal ideology during the reign of Kotys I. Perhaps the fluting radiating from the decorated with Apollo's image centre of the four Rogozen phialae was perceived as the rays of the sun-god? This assumption is supported by the eight beams on the bottom of phiale 86. The king-light-fire-Sun could be nothing else but "brilliant." 37

38



⁹
Group of phialae, Nos 3, 9, 11
¹⁰
Detail from phiale No 27

Phialae and Jugs

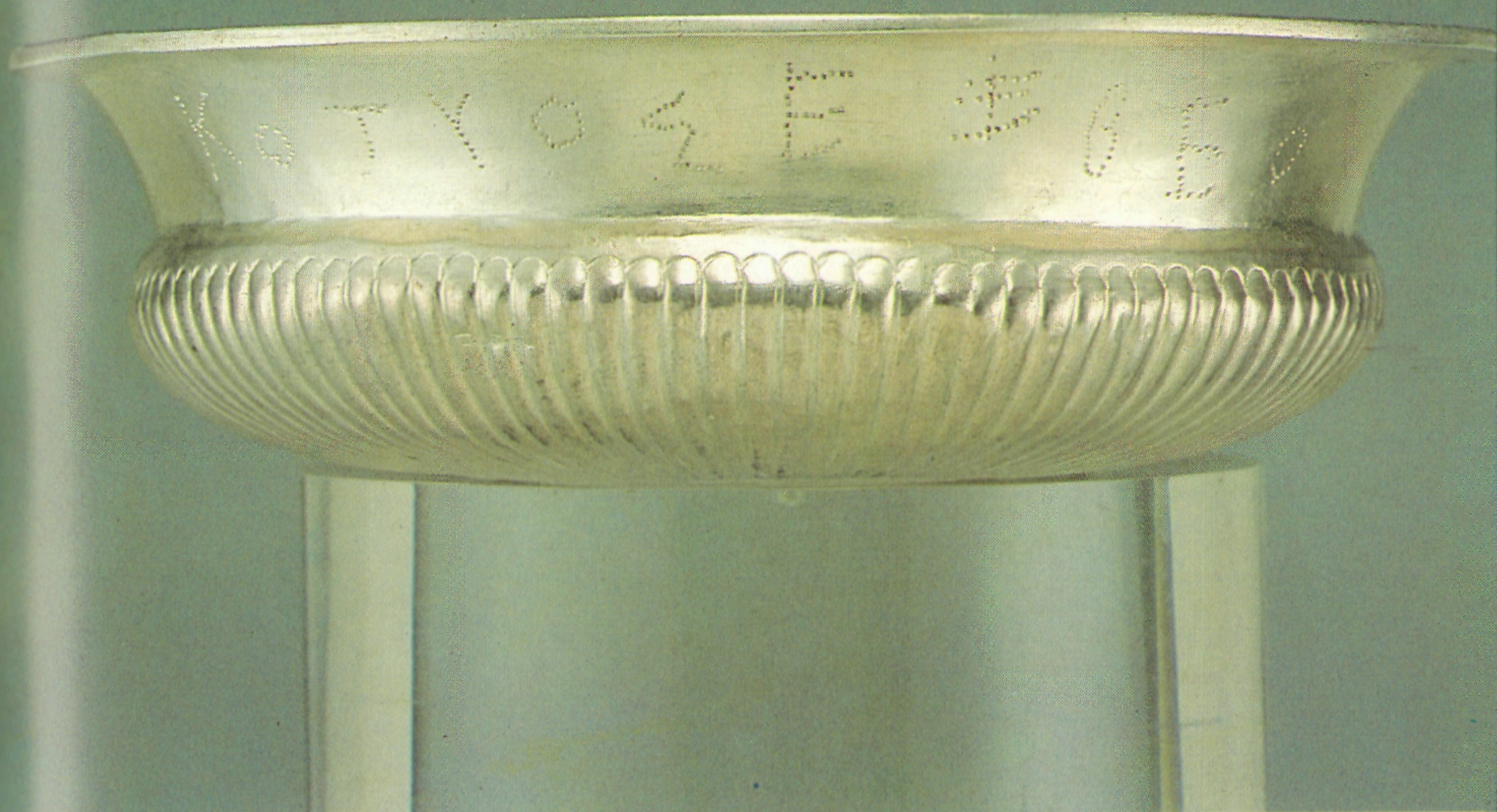


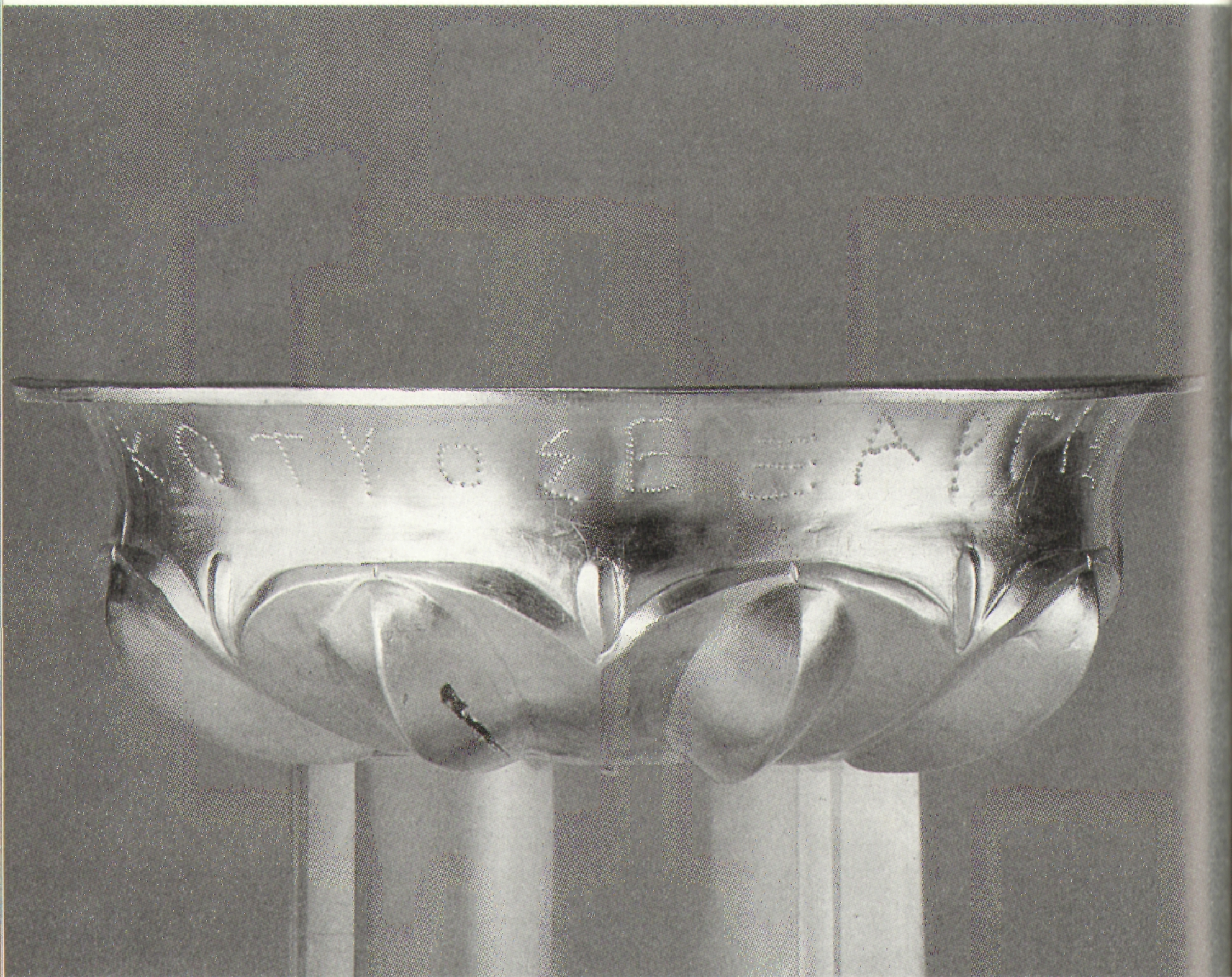


II
Phiale No 28

12
Phiale No 40

Phialae and Jugs





13
Phiale No 42

14
Achaemenidean phiale in the Ancient Orient Museum — Tokyo

15
*Phiale No 42, detail from the image
on the central part of the vessel*



44



16

Phiale No 44

17

Phiale No 44, detail





18

Phiale No 45

19

Phiale No 45, detail



48

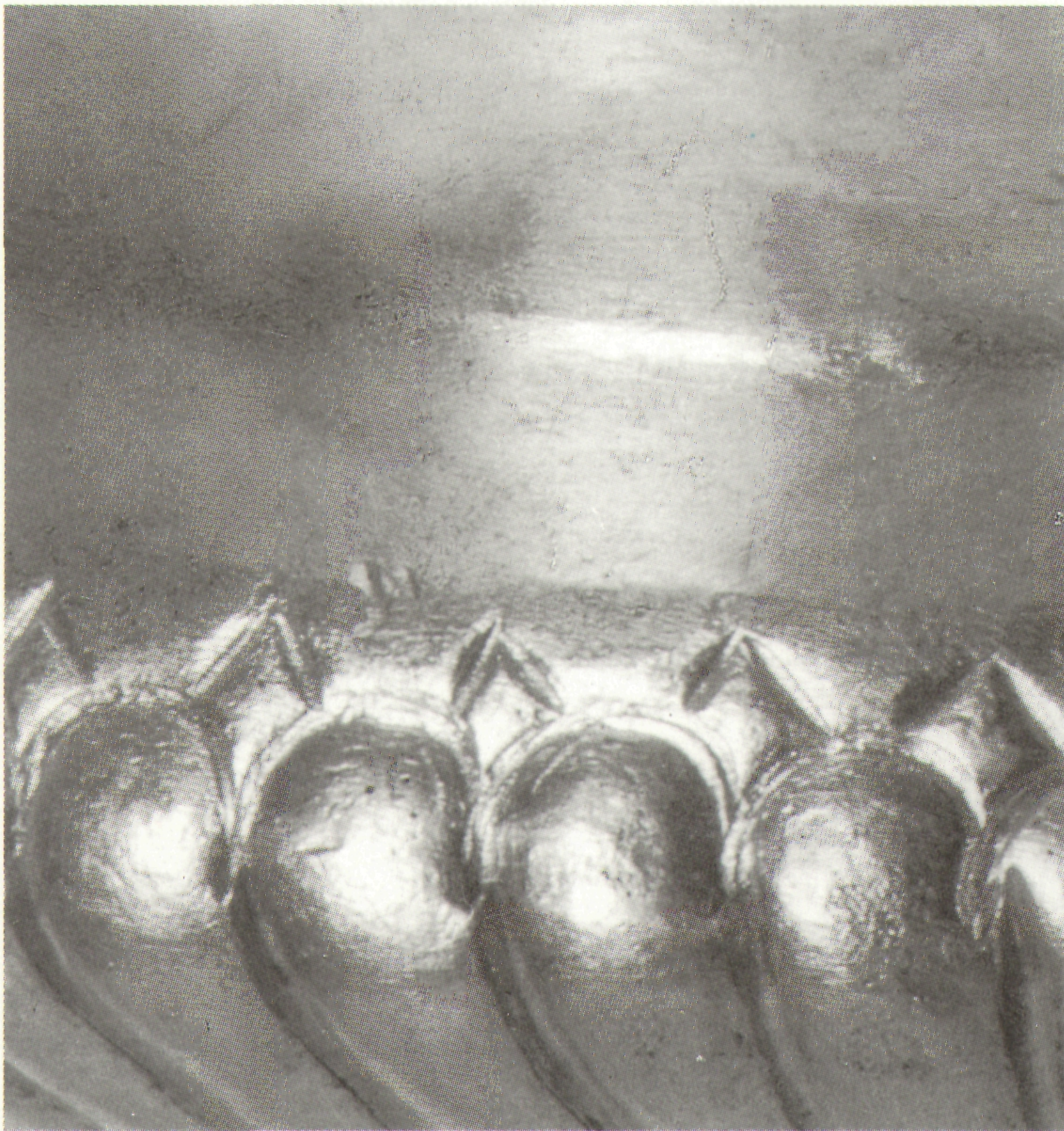


20
Phiale No 46

21
Phiale No 46, detail



50

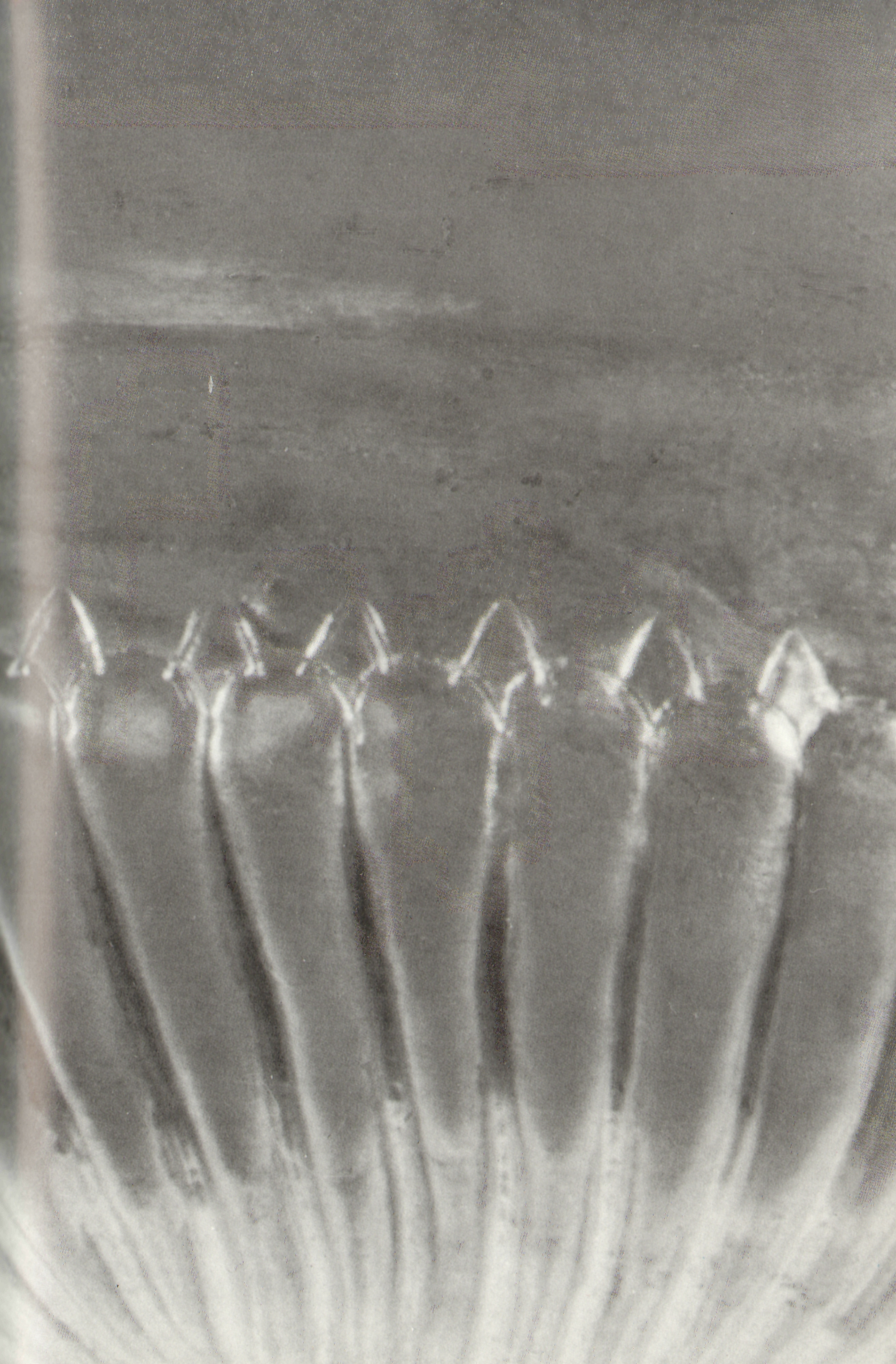


22

Phiale No 55, detail

23

Phiale No 104, detail



52



24

Phiale No 42

25

*Phiale No 102, detail from the image
on the central part of the vessel*



26

*Phiale No 101, detail from the image
on the central part of the vessel*

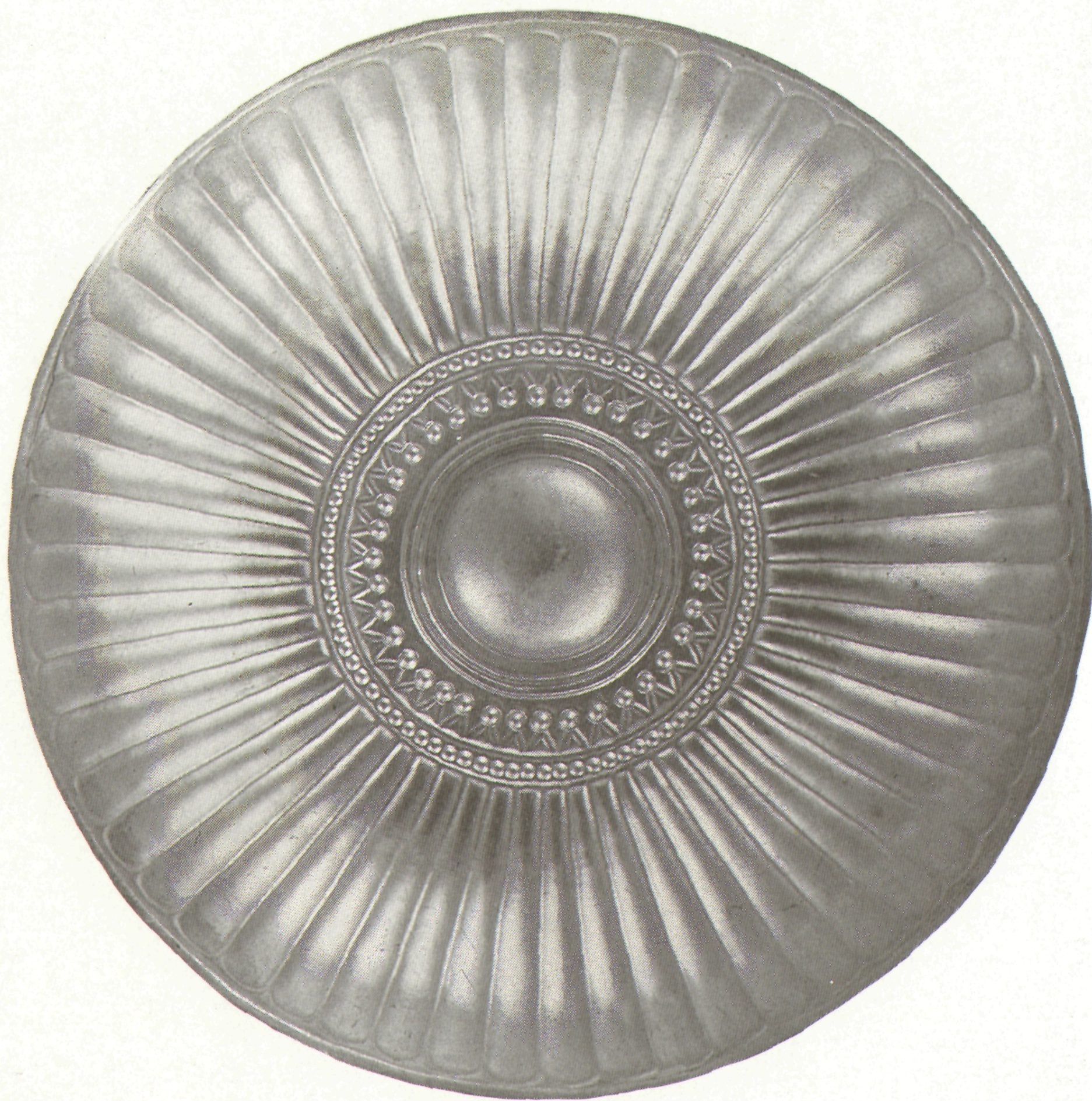
27

*Phiale No 103, detail from the image
on the central part of the vessel*





56



28

Phiale No 1

29

Phiale from Stoyanovo (Radyuvené), detail



58

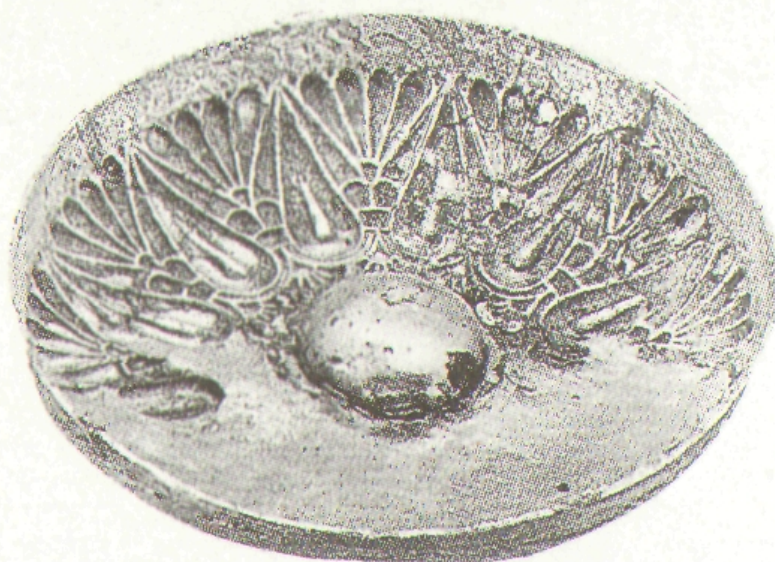


³⁰
Phiale No 80, detail

³¹
Phiale No 56, detail



60



32
Phiale No 2

33
Phiale from Sindos (Chalkidike, Greece), c 500 BC

34
Phiale No 2, detail



62



35
Phiale No 82

36
Phiale No 82, detail



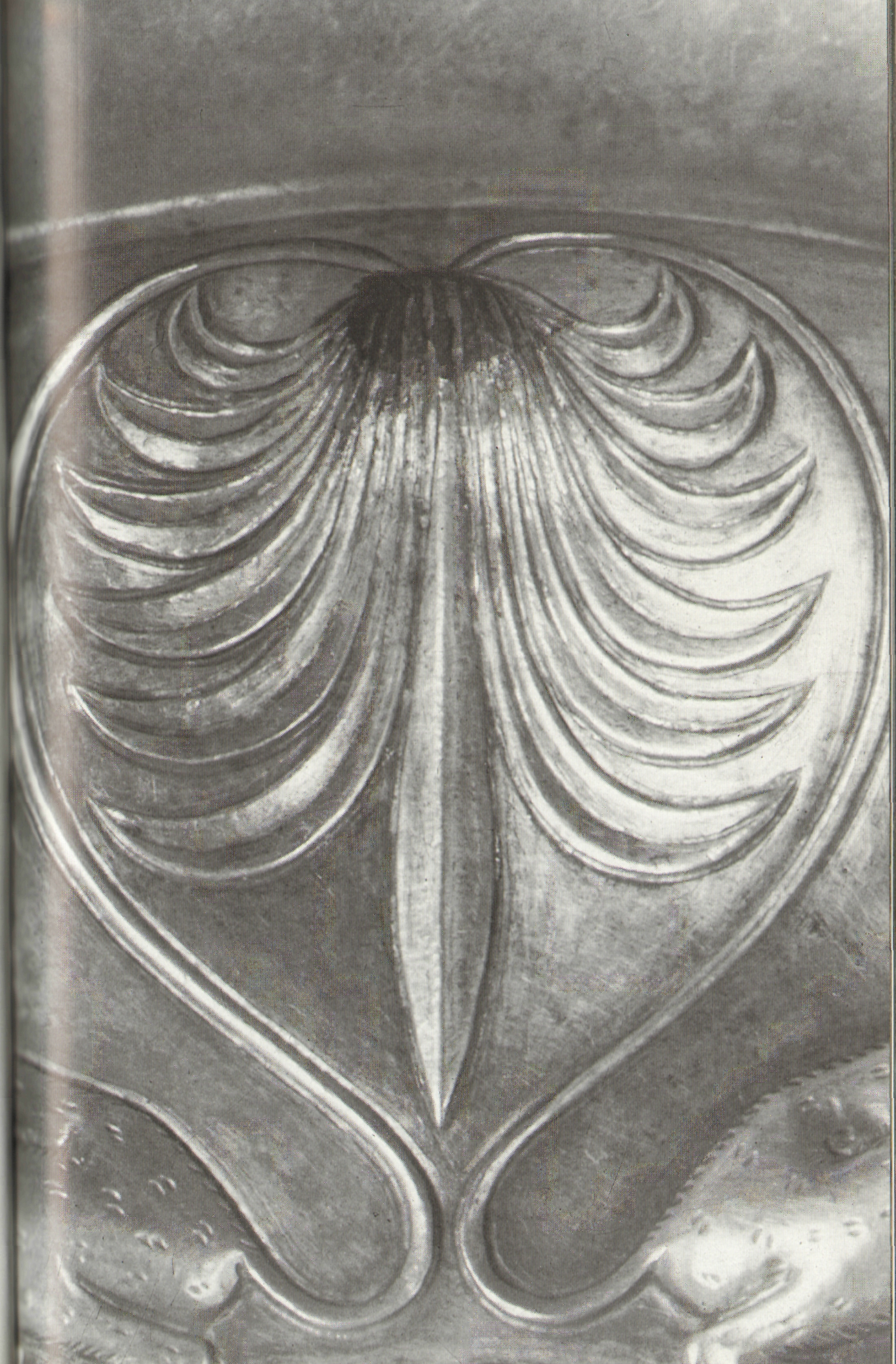
64



37
Phiale No 97

38
Phiale No 97, detail, palmette

39
Phiale No 97, detail, lions with horns — griffins









40
Phiale No 4

41
Bronze mirror from Stathatos' collection



70



42

Phiale No 94

43

Phiale No 95, detail



72



44

Phiale No 100

45

Phiale No 100, detail



74



46
Jug No 155

47
Jug No 159



76



48
Jug No 154
49
Jug No 157



78



50
Jug No 118

51
Jug No 112

52
Group of jugs, Nos 127, 128, 116, 122, 158







82



53
Jug No 147

54
Jug No 145





MYTHS
AND
IMAGES

Thracian mythology has reached us in fragments and from several sources. A lot of information comes from Greek and Roman writings. But these are outsiders' impressions and the authors tried to present their knowledge about Thracian gods and heroes in a form their compatriots would understand. It is difficult to imagine how some Greek or Roman names for Thracian deities evolved. But this was the fate of every non-literary society: its culture was reflected in the writings of peoples with a higher level of social development. Another source of Thracian mythology are the images on examples of Thracian art, the only purely Thracian information. But how should these pictorial narratives be interpreted? Can we hope to explain specific myths, or should we cautiously limit ourselves to examining the mythological structure only? Any attempt at reconstructing this varied and fragmented data must be done carefully and methodically. The comparative method provides a firm basis for juxtaposing incomplete Thracian myths with other better-known mythology. This will help us fill in the missing elements more accurately and understand the relevance of different features. Thracians always lived in close contact with the Anatolian and Mediterranean peoples, so they preserved a number of non-Indo-European elements in their mythology. The retrospective method is also useful as it enables older data to be clarified by comparing it with later information from Bulgarian and Balkan folklore which has preserved some ancient mythological influences. Recon-

structing Thracian mythology is difficult and complicated, and the results are always hypothetical.

Even before the Rogozen treasure was discovered, thracologists were familiar with images which they associated with Thracian mythology and royal ideology, particularly from the finds at Letnitsa, Mogilanska Mogila and Baiceni. They helped to determine the principal characteristics of Thracian imagery. The new treasure confirmed a number of earlier views and threw more light on the correlation between imagery and myth. It became clear that one mythological concept could be rendered through different images which acquire varying meanings in different contexts.

- 88 Therefore, the individual motifs, characteristics and gestures should be examined closely since their meaning varies independently of the overall picture. The complex correlation between symbolism and meaning enabled the Thracian artist to create numerous variants of the basic myths with a relatively limited pictorial repertoire. The artists used two principles to express the mythological narratives. In the first the images were united by some common activity; the second juxtaposed the main figures without any interaction. This second group is more difficult to interpret as there is no common action and studies are confined to the figures' structural relations, and the meaning of different features and motifs. Understanding Thracian mythology is a complex task particularly as there is no literal correlation between pictorial narratives and written sources. This is another proof that the scenes and images on Thracian objects are not simply illustrations of an oral narrative but independent artistic variants of myths. Readers are now invited to forget the difficulties involved in interpreting Thracian mythology and simply follow the illustrations into a picturesque world of gods, heroes and monsters. If readers develop their own explanations for some myths the original artists will have been successful as their myths live on.

The Flying Chariots (157)

A key question about this scene is the sex of the depicted gods. The chariots are driven by women. The passenger

behind the charioteer on the left is undoubtedly a goddess: she has shoulder-length hair and prominent breasts, she is dressed in a floor-length chiton, and is holding a phiale and a branch. These features suggest she is the goddess of fertility. The passenger sitting on the throne in the other chariot is a god with short curly hair, dressed in a knee-length chiton and holding a bow and arrow. Ivan Venedikov interprets this figure as Apollo because of the bow and arrow, Apollo's principal identifying feature. But why did the artist fail to conform to the Greek iconography for the god's clothing? Apollo holding a bow and arrow is always depicted wearing a chlamys flying behind him. He only appears in a chiton (and an ankle-length one at that) when he is performing his duties as leader of the Muses. This scene could easily be interpreted as Apollo's return from the land of the Hyperboreans, but I propose a different explanation. Folk culture codes different aspects of everyday life, including hairstyle and costume. Primitive societies regarded hairstyles as symbols of social status rather than mere fashion. Long hair is a sign that the woman is married, while short hair denotes a single girl. Differences in costume carry similar messages. The God's main feature is his bow, which also was used by Thracians and Greeks to designate the goddess of hunting. It was important for hunting and hunters to be protected by a female deity, frequently appearing in the myth as a virgin such as Artemis. It is strange that these "male" activities were entrusted to a young woman. The explanation stems from the main ritual practices of this ancient society: the initiation of young men and women as full members of the community. Until then there was no sexual differentiation between the young people, because sex was a social rather than a biological characteristic. Only after initiation were young men allowed to become warriors, husbands and fathers, while girls became wives and mothers. This explains why the artist did not emphasize the figure's breasts: they were a sign of maternal status, whereas the idea was to stress virginity. Pre-initiation young people were portrayed in myths as hunters (for example the Greek Atalanta was the most accomplished hunter). Why was

hunting a principal occupation of young girls as well as boys? Largely because it conveniently reflected the young individuals' transient situation which placed them outside society, in a marginal zone, close to nature. They were regarded as something like an animal or outlaw. They had to become skilled in hunting during this initiation training period if they were to leave the wild and return to society, defeat the animal in themselves and establish that they are human beings (thereby becoming full members of the community). The hunting trial was actually a test of ability to defeat the wild through the cultural habits acquired. So it was natural for the patron goddess of initiation into adulthood to be an excellent huntress, wandering the forests accompanied by young men and women and shooting animals with her magic bow. It was also natural for her to guard her virginal status jealously and remain unmarried, because her function was to protect young people in the period before they married. All features of the figure in the second chariot on the Rogozen jug support the hypothesis that it is the virgin goddess of hunting. This figure therefore incarnates the other, virginal, aspect of femininity in primitive society, complementing the goddess of fertility in the first chariot. The two goddesses were possibly interpreted in the Thracian myth as mother and daughter (like Leto and Artemis). The specific tale narrated by this scene is probably the two deities hurrying in their winged chariots, driven by four winged horses, to the place (or time?) of their meeting. The long journey dividing them is actually the distance between their social statuses. At the moment they meet, the two goddesses will merge into one image as the young girl assumes a womanhood position. This can be explained through the Greek myth about Demeter and her daughter Kore. Hades, the god of the underworld, stole the girl and by the time mother and daughter met again, Kore had become Persephone, Hades' wife. The Rogozen jug may have been used in rituals during festivities dedicated to the two Thracian goddesses, illustrating the two basic goddess statuses: mother and daughter.

Goddess Riding a Lionness (155)

The bow prompted Bogdan Nikolov to call the goddess Bendis, while the lion made Ivan Venedikov regard her as Cybele. Both identifications are partial, because they are based on specific attributes and fail to explain the entire image. The basic question is: why was the image of the goddess duplicated?

This series of pictures cannot be considered a narration. At first glance the goddess does not take part in any action, and the central scene, a lion attacking a stag, seems totally unrelated to the remaining components. The myth is built around oppositions. The opposition between people and animals is the most poignant aspect of the more general (and basic) opposition between culture and nature. It is in this case manifested through the relationship between goddess and lionness, expressed pictorially by her riding the animal. Both myth and ritual often resort to the symbolism of taming or harnessing to demonstrate the outcome of a conflict: the defeated criminal in the Thracian-Macedonian ritual dance *carpeia* is harnessed in the plough next to the oxen; likewise Bellerophon needs help from the celestial bridle to mount the winged Pegasus. A saddled lion is present on some Persian monuments, Cybele is depicted sitting on lions or has lions pulling her chariot. The lion is an incarnation of royalty, hence a person defeating a lion acquires royal status. This leads to the hypothesis that the image on the Rogozen jug is Queen Artemis, who, according to Herodotus, was worshipped by Thracian women. However no firm conclusion has been reached about the goddess' name, although she was probably royal. Setting figures above or below each other demonstrated the value placed on them by the archaic community. In mythological thinking, the upper position denoted supremacy, for example the goddess riding the lionness. In the animal scene, the lion has jumped on to the stag, signifying victory.

The opposition between herbivores and carnivores is a mild expression of the opposition between nature and culture. On the Rogozen jug it is illustrated by the struggle between lion and stag in which the predator wins.

The struggles on the jug have different objectives: the goddess subordinates the lioness to become Queen, the lion defeats the stag to show his strength.

It is interesting that irrespective of the divine figure's importance, the animal motif occupies a central position in the pictures. Perhaps this explains the myth's principal function: to reduce the tension between adversaries, to gradually replace the main social opposition by one of decreasing importance, to replace human figures by animals. Therefore, to discover the social norm hidden behind this metaphor, we must first guess the meaning invested in the key participants in the central scene.

- 92 The lion and stag (or hind) are well-known epic metaphors for the hero and maiden. Here are some familiar examples. Before sacrificing her daughter over the grave of Achilles, Hecuba dreamed of a hind being attacked by a wolf. The identification of the young girl with a hind is clear and unambiguous, as is the substitution of Iphigenia by a hind, when her father Agamemnon offered her as a sacrifice before the Achaeans' march against Troy. In the southern Slavic folklore the maiden-warrior often wears a feather from the winged stag and young girls frequently wear a horned head-dress in rituals. Penelope gave Odysseus a gold clasp decorated with the image of a ferocious dog holding a young hind in its claws. This clearly indicates that Penelope is the victim and Odysseus the attacker. These analogies have a matrimonial symbolism: the spirit of Achilles claims Polyxena as his wife; Iphigenia is deceived that she is going to her wedding with Achilles; Bulgarian folk songs and rituals are connected with courtship; and Penelope and Odysseus are spouses. In some Greek vases the wedding scenes are accompanied by similar animal motifs. Above the scene of Thetis' abduction by Peleus, there is a hind fallen to its knees, attacked by two griffins, illustrating mythical abduction. Hunting was a symbol of love in the myths and culture of different peoples. Absorbed by the pursuit of a golden stag, the Indian hero Rama abandoned his wife and she was abducted. After his wedding, the Hittite hero lost interest in hunting and the goddess kept all animals away from him.

The Bulgarian hunter refrained from shooting a stag out of fear that his wife would die. Many Indo-European heroes found their brides during stag hunts. The Bulgarian folk hero chased a magic stag and caught it with the help of some maidens, but at the end of the folk song the animal turns out to be Vida, the beautiful girl he eventually marries. On many Greek vases the pursuit of a hare or hind by a young person has an erotic symbolism. Indian Prakritian hunting songs later served as models for romantic lyrics. This type of symbolism is determined by several factors. We have already seen that hunting marked the transition from youth to adulthood. It was one of the mythical and ritual ways of showing that young people were ready to get married. The wedding was always interpreted as a struggle (war or contest) between the bride and bridegroom, because they belonged to two different families and this differentiation, interpreted as animosity, could only be overcome by a struggle in which one of the adversaries dies. In zoomorphic code this animosity was translated through the familiar initiation formula of hunting: a predator chasing a herbivorous animal. In primitive societies women always occupied a secondary role, illustrated by the herbivorous animal's weaker position. But why was the maiden usually symbolized by a stag (and sometimes by a hare)? The stag was one of the principal mythological indicators of transition: this animal regularly sheds its coat and antlers, and is thereby periodically renewed. The victorious hero and the lion were identical images, therefore they were often interchangeable. The lion in our scene will kill the stag. Victory was always depicted by the death of the losing adversary. The wedding was identical to one of the key participants' death: many songs end with the death of either the maiden or hero. This was a ritual death which was necessary for the transition from one status to another. Mythological consciousness was not familiar with linear time. Life was presented as unconnected cycles; the transition from one cycle to another took place by dying in one state and being reborn in another. The central scene also explains the female image on jug 155. The goddess is depicted as a mother (shoulder-length

hair, long chiton and prominent breasts), but the bow and arrow unambiguously suggest her virginal status. In the decoration on jug 157 these two aspects were personified in two different gods, while on jug 155 they are integrated into a dual image. What is more, the dual goddess appears symmetrically on both sides of the central scene, which symbolizes the transition from maiden to wife. The scene seems to stress that at this critical moment the girl is wavering between Artemis (patron goddess of maidens) and Hera (patron goddess of marriage). The artist has created a generalized image of the two goddesses and by duplicating it implies the dual state of the stag-maiden.

- 94 This jug's handle is attached to the body with a beardless male face surrounded by an animal skin. This is how the Greeks usually depicted Heracles; with the pelt of the Cithaeron Lion he had killed, thrown over his shoulders. The transformation of the antagonist's skin into a feature of the victorious hero testifies to their connection. Heracles is diametrically opposite the central scene which, according to illustrative principles, demonstrates the link between the two images (like the symmetrical duplication of the goddess figure). Could it be that the artist wished to show the anthropomorphic image of the hero-lion assaulting the stag? The pursuit of the Hind of Ceryneia occupied a central place in the Labours of Heracles. The hind was raised by Artemis who forbade the hero to wound or kill it. Heracles caught up with the swift hind with golden antlers near the Ladon river and tied it up before crossing the river. This helps explain the mythical narrative on the jug. Perhaps it is the story of the lion-hero's pursuit of the maiden-hind, belonging by initiation to the goddess of hunting. In spite of Artemis' indignation, the hero succeeds in reaching his prey in this wedding contest and she then comes under Hera's protection. We do not know the Triballian names for either the hero or the goddess. Still, we can claim with some certainty that this interpretation reflects the myth's structure and story line.

The Thracian Amazon (154)

The figures on jug 154 are connected with the same my-

thical and ritual notions. Ivan Venedikov proposed to interpret them as Artemis or Apollo pursuing Heracles for having killed the Hind of Ceryneia. The adversary of the Greek hero was most certainly a female as the left breast is rendered in relief. The short hair and short tunic show she is a virgin goddess. However, there are certain details in the illustration which cannot be explained by the familiar functions and features of Artemis. The goddess was almost never depicted with a spear, her preferred weapons were the bow and arrow characteristic of young hunters. Similarly, the equine figure behind her shows she is no *hipposoa*, or exciter of horses, as the animal is bridled and therefore tamed, which is evidence of riding skills. The griffin flanking the female figure on the other side did not only symbolize the land of the Hyperboreans, particularly as Artemis, unlike her brother, was practically never associated with this mythical land. Finally, Artemis was always depicted in hunting shoes, whereas here all the figures are barefoot.

95

Analyzing these figures shows that an Amazon rather than the goddess of hunting is represented on the jug. The folk origin of this name (A-mazon) derives from "non-nursing" or "non-nursed", because Amazons never had a legitimate marriage and never looked after their children. In the Thracian image one breast of the girl is shown in relief, while the other is deliberately covered by an item of clothing, stressing its absence. In Greek illustrations the Amazon image was often flanked by a horse and a griffin because the griffin symbolized the distant land where the Amazon tribe was supposed to have lived. All myths portray them as aliens. However, this is one of the ways mythological thought coded the girl's extrasocial position during her initiation; the Amazon myth reflected social rather than ethnic or historical realities. Jean-Pierre Vernant and William Tyrrell have revealed the social roots of the Amazon myth. According to them, the paradoxical figure of the maiden-warrior, a woman engaged in male activities, stemmed from the need to consider the possibility of the girl not marrying at the end of her initiation period. The girl was then left with a masculine alternative:

to become a warrior. The Amazon figure occurs in Bulgarian folk songs as well. This is the maiden-heroine, often called Voinka (female-warrior), who wandered far and wide to test her strength against her male counterparts. She often defeats, kills or imprisons them, turning them into her slaves. At mythological level this image is paralleled by the *samodiva* (wood-nymph), who never marries, has only one breast, does not look after children and fights heroes. The similarities between the Amazons in Greek mythology and the *samodivas* in Bulgarian folklore are almost literal. This may be due to the preservation of an ancient layer in Bulgarian folklore, or perhaps this image is indispensable to any mythology because it shows the “dangers” threatening young girls during their initiation period: they might remain maiden-warriors, failing to attain their social goal of marriage.

The maiden-warrior probably had significant importance in Thrace. She is present in the myth about Harpalyce who lived in the woods, rode like the wind and fought against the warriors pursuing her. Naturally, the Thracians did not call their heroine Amazon. But her principal feature was her conflict with heroes. It is interesting that Herodotus told stories about Scythian Amazons, calling them by their local name, *oiorpata*, which he translated as “men-killers”. Readers have probably guessed the meaning behind the maiden’s fight with the heroes. This is an epic portrayal of the wedding ritual. The path to marriage, and therefore peace between the families of the bride and bridegroom, involved a struggle in which one of the contestants had to die. Marriage did not mean harmony, but the bride’s subordination to the bridegroom (in the old patriarchal communities). It is noteworthy that Achilles did not notice Penthesilea’s beauty until after he had killed her; he then wished to have such a wife. A Bulgarian folk song says the maiden-warrior has three hearts: after the hero pierced the maiden’s heart, the wife’s heart started throbbing and the third heart takes over when the wife grows old. This again illustrates that mythological consciousness only permitted an individual’s transition from one social status to another after his or her death in their previous capacity.

In the scene under consideration the maiden is about to kill the hero. This is a frequent outcome: the hero is to die while trying to claim the hand of the valiant maiden. The scene recurs three times establishing the theme's ongoing nature. The girl's principal task is to defend her virginity: she is saving herself for her first love, according to folk songs. Paradoxically, the maiden-warrior falls in love with the hero who kills her, even though she had boasted about the piles of skulls and bones of the heroes she had killed, that is, rejected as claimants for her hand. Her death stops her heroic deeds. The female-warrior dies to begin a new life as a wife. But the myth is not interested in this new life.

97

The scene depicted on the sides of jug 154 is the opposite of the central motif on jug 155. Both scenes depict the wedding contest, albeit in anthropomorphic and zoomorphic codes. The outcome of the contest is also different: the Amazon defeats Heracles in one scene, while Heracles (the lion) defeats the maiden (the hind) in the other. The circle is closed by showing that those two alternative critical moments have one final conclusion in ancient community life: marriage.

The artist who made jug 154 was certainly familiar with Greek mythology. He portrayed Heracles with his typical features: a club, lion skin and heroic nakedness. Yet, in Greek illustrations, Heracles was never defeated by an Amazon, although he repeatedly fought them. Therefore, the local artist was not narrating a Greek myth; he just borrowed signs from Greek art. Heracles was a general hero image popular in Thrace and his nakedness allowed his masculinity to be more clearly portrayed, which was important given that the scene was a struggle between male and female. This demonstrates the Thracian artist's interest in Greek art, which often served as a rich iconographic source for barbarian artists.

The Goddess among Centaurs (158)

The decoration of this jug follows a familiar principle in Thracian art of a central figure surrounded symmetrically by the remaining ones. But there is one difference: the

images here are arranged in two horizontal bands. Although they contain different subjects, the two scenes are constructed in the same way. The artist was probably aiming to create an impressive artistic effect while emphasizing the connection between the two images making them parts of one coherent picture.

Can we claim that the two scenes reveal some narrative? In the lower image the dogs are attacking the bull. We may assume by analogy that the Centaurs in the upper illustration are attacking the goddess. But what is the meaning of this attack? The answer demands an analysis of the image's elements and their interrelations.

- 98 After two bronze matrices were discovered in northeastern Bulgaria, it became clear that the Centaur was an important figure in Thracian mythology. Unlike its Greek analogue, the Thracian Centaur had wings, sometimes he had only two legs or no arms as on the Rogozen jug. We do not know the Thracian name for this figure, but there is no doubt that he was popular with Thracians and other Indo-European peoples and played a strictly defined role. The first task is to reveal the mythical figures' hidden sociological or ideological message. Georges Dumézil and later Page Dubois suggested that he was a mythological projection of a young man during his initiation period. The Centaur as the ephebus was also an incarnation of anti-culture. He inhabited the periphery of civilization (mountains and peaks, forests and islands; his wings testifying to his marginal position between earth and heaven). Centaurs were ignorant of social norms: they violated hospitality, had no eating and drinking manners (they ate uncooked meat and got drunk on wine), and their relations with women were not regulated by marriage. This disregard for marriage was congenital: their father Ixion first violated this practice by coveting the wife of his host Zeus. Their dual image suggested their uncertain status between man and animal, while their unrestrained behaviour always led to conflicts with mythical heroes. Centaurs lived in a group and were active only during specific moments in the life of society. They appeared at the transition from the old to the new year; and at weddings where their

presence was regarded as dangerous because they usually stole the bride (such as their battle with the Lapiths). Dumézil is right in comparing centaurs to the masks worn during carnivals in present-day Europe, as they have similar, horse-like features. It is possible that some characters in Balkan and other folklore (such as Săntoaders, Calușars and Camels) are direct descendants of the ancient centaurs. They also had wings and were identified with the wind (for example the Indian Gandharva).

Two pairs of centaurs are running towards the goddess standing between them. This goddess resembles the so-called Persian Artemis: she has wings and she is holding dogs by their forepaws. But she may also be compared to the dog-eating Hecate, whose Zerynthian cave in southern Thrace has been documented.

This illustration associates a Potnia Theron type of goddess, the patron of animals, with centaurs, hybrid creatures combining both human and animal features. The other strip shows a fallen bull below the goddess; the bull is being attacked by animals on both sides. A parallel of the image on this jug has been found on a bronze mirror handle discovered in Thrace. In this picture a goddess dressed in a long garment is holding a bird in her hand and two sphinxes flank her head. Above her there are two lions devouring a ram that has fallen between them. Although some elements differ, their overall juxtapositions coincide. Therefore the myth can be reproduced in different variants. Only the superficial elements change while the general structure is constant.

Several basic structural elements persist in all "centaur myths" namely: the contest (trial through speed, such as flight or pursuit) and abduction of a girl (goddess, heroine or character in a carnival). In the Rigveda, the Gandharva were all brides' first fiancés, the identical Persian demon Gandarep abducted his friend Gershasp's wife, the Centaur Nessus tried to steal Deianira who had just married Heracles, drunken centaurs attacked Peirithoos' bride at the wedding, the Roman Luperci used to beat women, Ixion was seized by a passion for Hera, and so on. In common Indo-European law there existed a form of marriage Gand-

harva, in which a representative of the military (*kšatria*) abducted the girl with her consent but without asking for her father's. Probably Ixion married Dia in a similar way, without paying her father anything. These unorthodox marriages seem to reflect the situation in men's houses, where young girls lived alongside young men. Apparently in Thrace the centaurs' passion for women was a main feature of their behaviour. A centaur abducting a nymph is portrayed on a coin belonging to a southern Thracian tribe. Balkan folk festivities have preserved these notions. For example, the Romanian Saint Theodore's Day involves the superstition that it is dangerous for women (especially young brides!) to fail to worship the saint and to disregard the prohibition on "women's work" because the saint's horses may kill them, or, disguised as young men, abduct them. Similar customs exist in Bulgaria: young brides celebrate this day by plaiting horseshoes in their hair and singing songs with matrimonial connotations at horse races. In the *koukeri* rites belonging to the winter-spring festive cycle, the bride is the constant object of abduction. Thus, in all centaur myths the centaurs are trying to steal the bride. This mythical and ritual structure is, in my opinion, represented in the upper decoration on the jug from Rogozen. This is a transient situation and the figures taking part in it are similarly temporal: centaurs and the patron-goddess of wild-life. And Artemis, personifying here the abducted bride, is the patron-goddess of the transitional premarital rites.

The artist has emphasized that the centaurs are galloping at full speed which is a characteristic feature of these creatures. At a ritual level this is illustrated by the races typical of all festivities in which they participate: the Lupercalia, the Indian royal rites Vajapeia and Saint Theodore's Day. Plato wrote a very colourful description of the Bendis festivities in Athens. The principal event was a horse race during which the riders handed lighted torches to one another. Festivities honouring the Thracian goddess Bendis took place during the summer solstice, marking a critical moment in the annual cycle. Bendis was often identified with Artemis. Only ephebi, that is young men

at the initiation age, participated in the races: therefore the seasonal transition coincided with the main social transitions. On a relief in the British Museum, winners from the race are performing libations before Bendis as a sign of communion with the goddess. Acknowledging the winner restores the hierarchy, the normal order of the world and society. The mythological structures of the relief from London and the Rogozen jug are approximately identical: the aim of the race is to win the goddess' favour which is a weaker form of hierogamy or marriage through abduction.

How can this scene be linked to the lower decoration on the Rogozen jug? Both the goddess and bull are clearly being attacked. However, the roles of assailants and victims are reversed: in the top image the centaurs are attacking the goddess, while below — her sacred animals, the dogs, are assaulting the bull. There is an opposition between male and female: the centaurs and the bull represent masculinity while the goddess and the dogs are femininity. The combat between them runs parallel with the female symbol as the object of violence in one scene, and the male in the other. The situation is critical in both cases, corresponding to the seasonal and social relevance of the centaur myths and rituals. If the forces of anti-culture win, the goddess will be abducted and sacrilege will be committed, allowing chaos to prevail over order. If the world is to be saved, and calm is to be restored it is necessary for the deity to take the upper hand. In other words, the bull should be killed before the centaurs reach the goddess. The artist has shown clearly that this will happen: the goddess will remain unviolated as the bull is already sinking to his knees. The link between the two strips is emphasized by the bull being placed below the goddess' feet, as if she is triumphing over him. The idea of the victory of order over chaos is illustrated in a vertical plan. A number of analogies support this interpretation of the complex image. A Hindu myth describes how destructive chaotic forces, personified by the buffalo-demon 'Mahiṣa, afflict celestial inhabitants. In their fright, they handed over all their strength to a goddess, who finally killed

the assailant. The same mythological structure was also discovered closer both geographically and ethnically to Thrace. *Taurobolium* was the central ritual devoted to the Phrygian goddess Cybele. A bull assaulted by dogs and killed by a woman can be seen on the bottom of the cauldron from Gundestrup, which was made in the same lands as the Rogozen jug.

102 The elaborate mythical and ritual decoration of this vessel suggests that it was probably intended as a cult object. The jug was possibly used for libations during social and seasonal events such as New Year. The relief from the British Museum shows that these libations were accepted personally by the goddess, bringing the winners of the ritual horse races closer to herself. We may assume that this was the final act of the festive ritual cycle.

Auge and Heracles (4)

The one vessel in the Rogozen collection which is most certainly Greek is phiale 4. The emblem soldered on to the shallow and flat bottom shows a mythical scene. To clarify the scene, the artist wrote the female figure's name AUGE above her head and the word DELADE above the hero's. The two mean: "Auge, obviously". Ivan Venedikov hypothesized that this was a scene borrowed from a play and known to many Greeks.

The myth tells how Aleus, the King of Tegea, heard a prophecy that his grandson by his daughter Auge was to deprive him of his kingdom. To prevent this, he made Auge a priestess in Athena's temple, which required her to make a vow of chastity. However, fate is always stronger than humans. Heracles was passing through the kingdom and Aleus invited him to be his guest. After a rich feast, the drunken Heracles went to sleep in Athena's temple. On seeing Auge, he raped her and this unexpected relationship resulted in the birth of the great Moesian hero Telephos.

The Greek artist has skilfully revealed the psychology of the scene by elaborating the gestures, facial expressions and postures. However, the myth's deep meaning is also expressed on another plane: the participants and the mean-

ing of their actions are portrayed through visual metaphors. Heracles is characterized by his usual features: a lionskin, bow and quiver, and club. He is wearing a wreath on his head, a symbol suggesting his participation in the feast or his visit to a sacred place such as the temple. Auge is also described by two types of symbols; the diadem in her hair reveals her social prestige and the jewellery round her neck, wrists and ankles shows her to be a princess. The other signs describe the situation: the girl's hair is hanging loose, she is half-naked, only the right foot has a sandal, and only the right wrist and ankle have their jewellery. These features create a second image, no less informative than the action itself. Its interpretation was within the powers of ancient people and corresponded to the principles for symbolizing mythological content. 103

Auge's virginal status could be illustrated through a system of signs involving her clothing, hairstyle and jewellery. For example, her hair should not be loose, because only a bride would let her hair down after the wedding. Likewise, nakedness is not appropriate to virginity. These signs clearly imply a violation of the girl's virginal status. However, the artist went even further. Figures wearing only one sandal are rather numerous in Greek mythology. Showing only one foot as being shod (this is interpreted as the absence of the other foot) was a way of denoting the initiation and transitional state: there are too many examples even within Indo-European mythology to be cited here. This mythical and ritual sign was used to denote the asymmetry of the initiated person (it could be emphasized also by concealing one eye, one arm, or any one of the paired organs). The same asymmetry, that is violation of the body's normal balance, also typifies representatives of the world of the dead who appear lame, one-eyed, one-armed, and so on. This identification between young people during their initiation period and the forces of chaos is understandable. Those preparing for initiation live at the periphery of the cultured world, their behaviour is antisocial; they have to undergo a ritual change of sex. Knowing what happened to Auge in Athena's temple during that fateful night, it is clear that she did not forget to

put on her other sandal, nor did the artist forget to depict it. The girl is portrayed in a critical situation, at the moment she is being transformed into a woman. That is why not only the sandals, but every detail in her costume and decorations emphasize her asymmetrical state: she is half-naked, her belt, a symbol of chastity, has been taken off, she only has jewellery on her right wrist and ankle, and in spite of the diadem, her hair is loose. Even if he did not know the myth about Auge and Heracles, the Thracian who owned this vessel (his name DIDYKAIMOS is stippled on the mouth of the phiale) could read the deep meaning illustrated by these features.

104 This myth is actually based on a common Indo-European notion that representatives of the military often abused priestesses. The theme also recurs in the Thracian layer of Greek mythology: Lycurgus wanted to forcibly seduce Ambrosia, Dionysus' nurse, and the princess (maenad) Coronis was forced to give herself to Butes; Tereus raped Philomela; and Boreas abducted Orithyia. In aristocratic Thrace, not only military valour, but also the "sins" were a major ideological theme.

Other Greek mythological pictorial narratives can also be subjected to Thracian interpretation. The artists that made them probably also assumed this possibility. Thracian interpretation allowed valuable Greek objects to function in Thracian culture and be incorporated into their society. Therefore, objects of art such as the Rogozen treasure's phiale 4 are not only evidence of Greek artistic penetration into Thrace, but also of its incorporation into Thracian values.

Boar Hunt (159)

Thracian iconography mainly portrayed the mythical activities of two principal figures: the goddess and hero. The images on the Rogozen vessels enriched current knowledge about these divine characters by adding new variants, images and hypostases. The heroic cycle presents several key episodes from the mythical or epic biography of the warrior-king: different forms of trials, his marriage, investiture and deification. All these episodes can only be found in

appliqués on the Letnitsa treasure. Usually, as is typical of epic works, the artists elaborated only one of these episodes. Their favorite epic scene was hunting: the hero on horseback chases a lion, bear or most frequently a boar. The latter theme appears in the figuration on jug 159 from Rogozen.

The mythical boar hunt seems to have had a special meaning in Thracian ideology. During the Roman Age the same scene appeared in about 3000 reliefs: a horseman is about to throw his spear at a boar standing below a tree next to an altar. Inscriptions reveal that this hunter was called simply "Hero". The oldest prototype of this scene is on the silver plate of the belt from Lovets (5th century BC). A century later, a life-size sculpture group in bronze (the find from Mezek) reproduced the same scene. The boar appears very often in Thracian embossed metalwork which indicates its special place in Thracian myths and epic poetry.

105

Before assuming this important place in Thracian decorative art, the boar hunt had long been present in ancient art. It appears on the Neolithic frescoes of Çatal Hüyük, rock-carvings in Central Asia, Hittite and Persian sculpture and gem-carving, Mycenaean frescoes and seals, the art of Greeks, Celts and Scythians. This suggests that for millennia this scene occupied an important place in the ideology of ancient peoples.

The boar was one of the most constant symbols of the world beyond, of chaos, destruction and death. This is probably due to its mixed nature: the boar is both a herbivore and carnivore, and is therefore both peaceful and aggressive. It is on the borderline between wild and tame; although it is terrestrial, it often prefers swamps; in spite of living in families, boars often eat some of their litter. Everything that belongs to our world should be clearly defined in terms of behaviour; it should correspond to some norm and be attributed to a certain group or location. If such a differentiation is lacking, a creature is qualified as an offspring of chaos, becoming automatically a threat to the microcosm, the community and humanity. The boar's contradictory behaviour led to its consideration

as the live incarnation of the forces of chaos. In many myths it digs up crops and dooms people to starvation, adopting an anti-cultural stand. Thracian artists depicted a dragon as a fish with a boar's head (on the frontal from Stâncești), demonstrating that the animal was associated with the "sign" of the antagonist. Symbols of death dominate the boar image giving it a clear military connotation. The boar is a metamorphosis of the Persian war god Veretragna and the Greek Ares. At the epic level it is a metaphor for ferocious wars. The boar even posed a threat to the gods: in one myth Zeus was torn apart by one of these animals; Leto, pregnant with the twins Artemis and Apollo, was frightened in Delphi by a boar.

It was natural for the royal ideology, which was generally modelled on myths, to choose this animal as the hero's main opponent in his trials before acquiring the crown. It seems that in the Balkans, a successful boar hunt was the main criterion for military initiation. A Macedonian youth could sit as an equal among warriors only after he had killed a boar without using a net. That is why the animal appears so frequently in decorations on the weaponry of Greeks, Scythians, Celts, Thracians and Germans.

Initiation trials were often organized as hunts because, defeating the animal, the young man confirmed his humanity and became a full member of the primitive community. Hunting was also the principal form of trial for a future ruler, as evidenced by Thracian written sources. The model ruler, the mythical Edonian hero Rhesus, was a superb hunter. After his death, his brothers had to choose a new king. One of them "engaged in a battle with a lion but perished" which showed he was unworthy of the high rank. He was far inferior to Rhesus, to whom boars offered themselves to be slaughtered, to honour the great hunter.

Two hunters are in the pictorial narrative on the Rogozen jug. This suggests a contest between two claimants to the throne. The winner appears to be the hunter attacking the animal from behind; his spear will slay the beast.

Interestingly, the victorious hunter has thrown his spear at the boar, but he is holding another spear. Hunters and

warriors often set off with two spears: Bendis, the Thracian goddess of hunting was also called Diloncha, which means "carrying two spears". But, why did only one hunter have the privilege of two spears? This must have had something to do with the scene's message. The mystery can only be unravelled by analyzing all elements in the image. A female half-figure appears between the two mounted hunters, exactly below the handle of the jug. This could be the image of the goddess of hunting. Her presence in the hunt is natural as she was always connected with scenes of this type. For example, the monstrous boar ruining the crops of Calydonia, had been sent by Artemis to punish the king who forgot to offer her a sacrifice. The story may vary, but there was a constant connection between the goddess of hunting and the boar, which justified her appearance in this decoration. But there was something else. The hunter's success depended on the benevolence of the goddess of hunting, as she gave him the magic weapon that would slay the monstrous animal. This was how the goddess indicated her chosen contestant. This explains the origin of the "redundant" third spear in the scene: it marked the divine choice which determined the winner in the royal contest. The trophy, the animal's tusks, skin or head, would go to the hunter on the right and become insignia of legitimate power, like the golden fleece of the ram which Hermes led into the flocks of Atreus. Therefore, the boar's head on the reverse side of coins of Kotys I was a royal insignia. 107

The ritual applications of this jug were quite diverse. It was possibly used for libations to the goddess of hunting before and after the hunt. Or, maybe, it was used only during the ritual hunt, through which the ruler, by defeating the boar, demonstrated his legitimate right to the throne.

Bellerophon and Chimaera (162)

This myth was always associated with critical situations, occurring when order, based on strictly defined roles and positions, began to be disrupted. The attack against order was total, encompassing all spheres of life: natural, social

and individual. The crisis travelled from the periphery to the centre, from the profane to the sacred. In calendar terms it was expected around the change of seasons; at a social level, during the initiation cycles; and at an individual level, during the moments of transition (such as a wedding). If the myth was to describe a critical state and offer all possible outcomes, it needed suitable images, masks and actions, as well as corresponding formulas and clichés for its oral, ritual and pictorial narratives.

108

The cause of the crisis was most often personified through the images of fantastic creatures. Ancient arts abound in all kinds of monsters, leading some researchers to praise the artists' "inexhaustible" and "burning" imagination. But even a cursory analysis of the fantastic creatures in ancient iconography suggests that they had common features. The artists usually used hybrids, combining characteristics from different animals in one image (such as the griffin which combines aspects of an eagle, lion and snake). Hybridity violates recognized norms, therefore the fantastic creature becomes an incarnation of chaos.

Chimaera's first appearance in Thracian art was in the Rogozen find. Although fragmented, jug 162 shows the familiar hybrid image of the mythical monster: a goat's head on a lion's body whose tail ends in a snake's head. The Chimaera is a paradoxical combination of opposites: between carnivore and herbivore; terrestrial and amphibian; the Earth and the underworld; and the lion's fearlessness and the nanny-goat's stubbornness. Greek mythology located this monster in Lycia, the periphery of the cultured world, where harbingers of chaos were usually active. The Chimaera was invincible and her fiery breath from her goat's head scorched the land.

Only Bellerophon could kill the monster, thanks to his magic helper, the winged horse Pegasus. The hero's biography is a model of the initiation transition. His childhood name was Hipponous, but in Corinth he killed the serpent-like Bellerus and was named Bellerophon, killer of Bellerus. The name change was obligatory in the initiation, because it marked an individual's radical transformation to a new status; a rebirth. Being tainted by this murder,

the young hero was forced to leave the city and go to Tiryns. There he was received and absolved of his sin by King Proetus, but the queen vilified him after he refused her advances. Bellerophon again had to leave town. Proetus gave him a sealed letter to take to his father-in-law Iobates, the king of Lycia, asking him to kill Bellerophon. Iobates gave Bellerophon very difficult tasks such as fighting the Amazons and the Solymi tribe; but his major trial was to fight the Chimaera. Riding Pegasus the hero descended from the skies and killed the monster. Some written sources even attribute the victory to the winged horse.

Pegasus was born out of the marriage of Poseidon and Medusa. He could not be tamed, or domesticated to allow him to enter civilization, until Athena gave Bellerophon a magic gold bridle. The hero acted as a "horse-tamer", one of the qualities given to the great kings in *The Iliad*. Breaking in a horse and becoming a skilled rider was probably a compulsory royal practice for several Indo-European peoples. This is why all horse images (even just their heads) in Thracian embossed metalwork contained a bridle: it was a means of subordination, a sign of civilizing the wild. If the king was unable to tame his horses, he became their victim: this happened to the Thracian ruler Diomedes, who was eaten by his horses which he had fed on human flesh. The image of the winged horse was very popular in Thrace (for example jug 157 from Rogozen). A gold rhyton crowned by a head of Pegasus was found near the town of Razgrad. The other Thracian favourite, centaurs, also always had wings. The hero's meeting with his fantastic assistant, the horse, is an important epic motif. Indo-Europeans usually depict these two figures as twin-brothers, emphasizing their underlying equality. That is why they form a stable centaur-like pair. A reflection of this mythical notion is also found in the Macedonian rule that the king should hunt only on horseback. In Thracian art too, the hunting hero always appears mounted.

The central part of the decoration on jug 162 depicts the battle between the Chimaera and Bellerophon riding

Pegasus. Two more of the hero's adversaries are depicted behind the principal foe. The first is a strange and hitherto unknown hybrid: a griffin with a female head on its back. I suspect the local artist was trying to depict a sphinx. Perhaps he had never seen that creature in Greek art and worked purely from verbal accounts describing the unknown through the known, such as: "the sphinx resembles a griffin, but it has a woman's head". And the artist created the image after the Chimaera, placing the female head on the griffin's back instead of its neck. This is perhaps how the strange hybrid griffin-sphinx was born. It is followed by a lionness.

110 The myth about Bellerophon never refers to a fight against these two adversaries. So why did the artist confront the hero with them? The main trial of Indo-European heroes was the struggle against a triple enemy represented by three different figures, or one triple-bodied, or three-headed monster. The Chimaera (like the sphinx) consisted of three animals so it could be the incarnation of the triple adversary. However, the artist had emphasized the Chimaera's triple nature by adding two more foes: the sphinx and the lion. Perhaps these creatures should be united under the term "hypostases", because in Greek mythology they were all considered representatives of the *drakaina*. They were also sisters from the marriage of Typhon and Echidna.

Above the main decorative strip which illustrates the struggle between Bellerophon and the Chimaera, the metalsmith has hammered out 13 rams' heads. Their number coincides exactly with the number of participants in the scene. It is unlikely that these images were purely decorative; time and again we see the consistent system for explaining the action in Thracian art. The artist probably used the rams' heads to denote the stake placed on the battle; in most Indo-European myths this involved the donation of large flocks.

An eagle holding a snake in its beak is between the Chimaera and the sphinx. This is a very old motif which usually emphasizes the hero's struggle against his opponent. In this case it could express the omen Bellerophon

received before he began his struggle against the Chimaera. The eagle is a good omen: the bird has caught the snake, so the hero (on his winged horse) will defeat the diabolical monster.

The images on this jug have considerably extended examples of the struggle between hero and antagonist. It is amazing that this Greek myth penetrated so deep into Thrace and took root in its inhabitants' imagination, even receiving a local interpretation. However, another variant is possible: the myth may have originated in the northern Balkans and then spread south among the Hellenic population. This is supported by linguistic and folkloric data from the region where the Rogozen jug was made. Many names of the Bellerus type designate a mythical serpent-like monster. The Greeks too, must have recognized the foreign origin of Bellerus, because they accepted it as a Pelasgian, that is pre-Greek, Palaeobalkan name. The coincidence between linguistic and pictorial data in this case is too rare in Thracology to be overlooked. But could the myth about Bellerophon have originated in Thrace and could the image on the Rogozen jug be the first evidence of this? Besides, only this illustration confronts the hero with a lion, and what is more, one of Bellerophon's names was Leophontes, killer of lions.

III

The Procession of Fantastic Animals (165)

Until recently the animal style was considered the principal form of artistic expression among the peoples of the Eurasian steppes. The domination by animal figures was explained as mental backwardness; these people had allegedly not yet reached an anthropomorphic notion about the gods; their religious ideas were at a totemistic stage. Researchers are increasingly renouncing this evolutionary argument and are seeking the roots of the portrayal of animals not at the level of content but of the expression. Zoomorphism was only the preferred method for creating a special type of mythological, epic, ritual and pictorial narratives. With their physical characteristics, behavioural traits and specific habitats, animals were convenient embodiments for different mythological ideas. The animal

figure can cover a wider spectrum of meanings than the human image. At a certain stage in the development of barbarian art, a symbolic animal scene was sufficient. However, later, when artists faced the need to depict more extensive pictorial narratives, they began to include humans. This helped the mythological theme to become more specific and its symbolic range narrowed. As the context became more definite, animal figures had more strictly defined meanings. It is very difficult to understand the message of the ancient metalworkers when an object is marked with a single animal figure or part of it. Our interpretation, however, becomes more reliable when the animal is included in an extended composition, even if it consists entirely of zoomorphic images.

This is the case with the illustration on the sides and the bottom of the large beaker in the Rogozen treasure. The shape and style of its decoration, and the iconography, function and meaning of its pictorial narrative, have exact parallels in finds from Romania and Iron Gates: a total of four goblets and two helmets. This family of works testifies to a fixed meaning for the images, which was particularly important to Thracian rulers.

We will now try to make out the messages of the different animal figures. The goat was a magic animal, because it has wings sprouting from its back. Goat mythology is rich and contradictory. On the one hand, it was directly linked to folk fertility rites: rich crops would grow where a goat had passed. On the other hand, the goat nibbles the boughs of the tree of life, acting as an enemy of nature. This explains why the goat is considered as one of the main indicators of chaos, and the antagonist.

Anthropomorphic antagonists often have goat's names: for example Aix is the son of Python, and Aigis is a fire-breathing monster, sister of the Chimaera. Both as a representative of positive forces and the foe, the goat was frequently killed and offered as sacrifice. The most valuable parts of the goat were its horns: Apollo surrounded his sister Artemis' sanctuary on Delos with horns of goats he had killed; the horns of the goat Amalthea, which nursed the infant Zeus, became a symbol of abundance

(cornucopia — horn of plenty); the skin of the goat Aegis, defeated by Athena, became the famous aegis, a shield or garment; the goat-legged satyr Marsyas was skinned by Apollo; and the Hittite god Telepinus used to put all riches in a goat's fleece. From a ritual point of view, skinning a goat or covering the body with a goat's skin was associated with the initiation: the neophyte was transformed into an animal and later into a man.

The ambivalent function of the goat in myths and rituals is due to its role as mediator. The animal occupies the borderline between the domesticated and the wild: it can exist in both states, because it belongs to nature and civilization. In its capacity as mediator, the goat might become a human's mythical or ritual substitute. For example a goat was sacrificed instead of the Athenian girls during the initiation festivities called Brauronia; and billy-goats were found in the nets of the Thracian Harpalyke's pursuers. 113

A mediator can freely cross the boundaries between worlds. This was particularly valuable in the critical situations of initiation or consecration because, following its footsteps, one could pass to the world beyond. There are many myths and dynastic legends in which a goat (sometimes substituted by a sheep) shows the king the way to his future kingdom. The future Macedonian ruler Karanos (whose name possibly means "goat") was told a prophecy that he would find his kingdom by following a flock of goats. He passed through the city gates of Edessa, which he later named Aige (a goat's city), and turned it into the seat of the Macedonian royal court. In this myth the goat is shown as a mediator, in its specific role as a guiding animal, which helps space and social transitions.

The stag is one of the most popular animal figures in mythology. Like all hoofed animals, it marks the middle zone of the cosmos. Like the goat, it also occupies the borderline between the wild and domesticated; shedding its antlers and fur make it an even more convenient indicator of transition. We have already seen that the stag marked the transitional state of a young girl during the premarital period. The ritual or mythical stag hunt took

the hunter to new lands, helping him find or expand his kingdom, leading him out of difficult situations, contributing to his rise in social and sacred status, and finally helping him find the woman he would marry. It is clear that this animal figure symbolized a transitional stage. To denote sacredness, the mythical stag or its antlers were often gilded; on other occasions it was depicted as flying to emphasize that it could not be caught. It was a favourite figure for sacrifices, probably because it was considered along with horses and humans to be a zoomorphic model of the cosmos. But to perform this function, the stag had to go to the altar of its own free will and to offer itself to be sacrificed. This is what animals did in the temple of the Thracian mythical hero Rhesus.

At another level the stag acted as a founder. Many Indo-European heroes are supposed to have originated directly or indirectly from this animal. The Celts regarded the stag as a mythical ancestor.

The stag on the Rogozen beaker is preceded by a fantastic animal: it has eight legs, enormous branching antlers terminating in the heads of birds of prey, a predator's mane, a goat's beard and horse's hooves. The hybrid between horse and stag frequently occurs at ritual level. For example, the horses leading the funeral procession in the Altaic tombs wore stag masks. The guide, or mediator, helping the deceased to cross the boundary between worlds is again symbolized by a stag. Incorporating the features of several mediator-animals (horse, stag and goat) into one fantastic figure demonstrates the preoccupation to stress this function. The same can also be said about the creature having twice the normal number of legs. An excess of limbs has always been a sign of the underworld because it is not normal. The limbs' "supersymmetry" carries the same connotations of disturbed balance as asymmetry. But on the other hand, this eight-legged animal could cross boundaries and therefore became the principal means of mystic transportation. Sleipnir, the horse of the Germanic god Odin, had eight legs. The horses of the Siberian shamans also had eight legs because shamans acted as mediums between the community and the divine or daemonic

world. The fantastic figure on the Rogozen beaker radiates the idea that it is a supermediator.

The same notion accounts for the presence of so many mediator-animals in one procession; they double the transitional capacity. It is even possible that the animals' order in the procession represents increasing mediating ability: from the billy-goat to the eight-legged stag-horse-goat. The latter figure contains elements of real animals which indicate transition and therefore becomes a model of the cosmos. The creature stands on its hooves, its body is represented by animals permanently associated with the marginal zone, while the antlers are depicted as birds, constant markers of the heavens.

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The procession ends with an animal group consisting of a horned eagle clutching a hare in its talons and a fish in its beak. In antiquity the horn was a sign of supreme might exemplified by the eagles's actions: it subordinates animals living on land and in the water. Spatially, this group presents the zoomorphic indicators of the three zones of the vertical cosmos: the eagle codes the heavens; the hare, the middle; and the fish, the lower regions. The same animals also suggest the material structure of the world: air, earth, water. Here the existence of an ideological message seems likely. The horn and position of the eagle in the scene prove its dominance. Often in dynastic myths the bird of prey is associated with a ruler. For example, the hero depicted on a piece of Thracian greave is holding a drinking horn and an eagle in his hands, while the royal omen in jug 162 from Rogozen and on coins from the Thracian tribe Derroni, is identified by a bird of prey holding a reptile in its beak. The entire animal group on this jug can be interpreted as a zoomorphic coding of the ruler's investiture or apotheosis: the hero acquires rights over the land in which he has performed his heroic deeds. A direct parallel to this idea is found in the address by the Achaemenidean king to the rulers he had defeated: "Bring me earth and water!" These material elements are coded as the hare and fish.

The decoration continues on the bottom of the jug as well. Here we see a struggle between animals; a wolf assaulting

a boar. This scene is appropriate for the bottom because it reflects the idea of death. Earlier we considered the significance of the boar in Thracian art. This animal always denotes the antagonist. Killing this representative of chaos brought sanctity to the place where the deed happened, and transformed it into a zone of high culture. For example, after Apollo's victory over Python, Delphi became the sacred centre of ancient Greece. In much the same way, the city of Ephesus was erected at the place where, according to legend, a boar had been killed. The scene on the bottom of the jug introduced a new episode to the myth about the animal being a guide: it was to be sacrificed at the place where it had led the pursuing hunter. This sacrifice sanctified the foundations of the new structure (city, kingdom or nation).

An analysis of the pictorial narrative on the large jug from the Rogozen treasure shows that all animals in the procession are duo-functional: they are mediators and guides. Their concentration on the decoration demonstrates how messages were intensified through accumulating and doubling signs. The jug was therefore probably used in some very important rituals. The presence of the eight-legged animal suggests shamanic rituals. The shaman's function as supreme mediator was not alien to the Thracian rulers. It underlies stories about the mythical Thracian kings, Orpheus and Zalmoxis, and the historical rulers like Kosingas and Kotys. The king, personifying the entire community, had to be a synthesis of all ideological functions: he was a warrior, priest, and he held economic power. Perhaps this was the jug in which the narcotic and hallucinogenic drink was prepared to send the priest into a trance; his soul left his body and embarked on a long journey to the upper or subterranean world, assisted by the magic mediators depicted on the walls of the vessel. Judging by the size of the jug, the trip must have been very long.

The pictorial mythological narrative on the vessels of the Rogozen treasure give an idea about Thracian royal ideology. Of course, we cannot expect to find a coherent story about all the trials of the heroes or the lives of the goddess-

ses. Such narratives are not typical of folklore. Even Greek mythology lacks “mythological biographies” of the deities as they had local variants, which were often contradictory and confusing. We should discard the plastic reliefs of the gods created by the late adaptations of Greek mythology and art. Living mythology has numerous variants of mythical characters and theology is trying to arrange them and make them into historical fact. The Thracian mythological images on the vessels of the Rogozen treasure seldom depended on narratives and their content must largely be reconstructed by decoding their structure and features. That is why I doubt we will ever be able to retell Thracian mythology in the way Greek myths have been adapted for our children. We shall reconstruct divine or heroic cycles, without being certain whether they were known in their entirety to all Thracian tribes. Therefore, we cannot expect canonical iconography in Thracian art of the type of medieval iconography. Each new find will certainly enrich our pictorial repertoire and will reveal new variants of the Thracians’ main mythological themes. 117

118



55
Jug No 157

56
The decorative strip on the jug



57
Jug No 157, detail, the winged horses

58
Jug No 157, detail, the goddesses





I22



59

Jug No 155

60

The decorative strip on the jug

61

Jug No 155, detail, a lion attacking a stag



I24



62

Jug No 154

63

The decorative strip on the jug



125

64

Jug No 154, detail, a horse

65

Jug No 154, detail, an Amazon pursuing Heracles





128



66

Jug No 158

67

The decorative strip on the jug

68

Jug No 158, detail, a goddess with dogs











69

Jug No 158, detail, a centaur

70

Jug No 158, detail, a fallen bull

71

Jug No 158, detail, a dog attacking a bull





136



72

Phiale No 4

73

Phiale No 4, detail, Auge



138



74
Phiale No 4, detail, the pelt of the Cithaeron lion

75
Phiale No 4, detail, Heracles

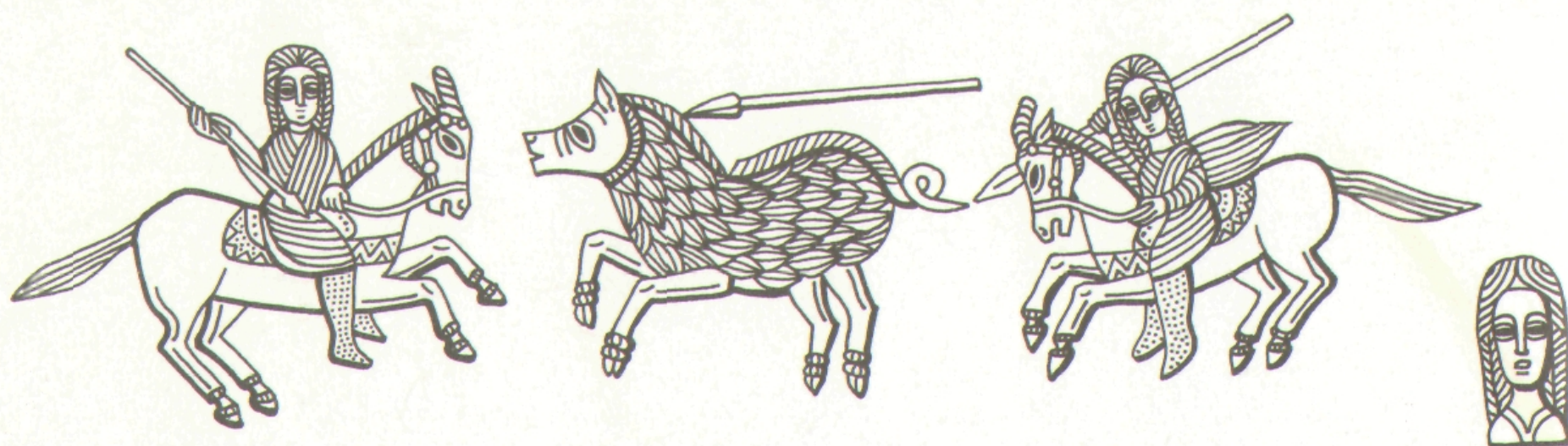
76
Phiale No 4, detail







142



77
Jug No 159

78
The decorative strip on the jug

79.
Jug No 159, detail, a goddess









80

Jug No 159, detail, a mounted hunter

81

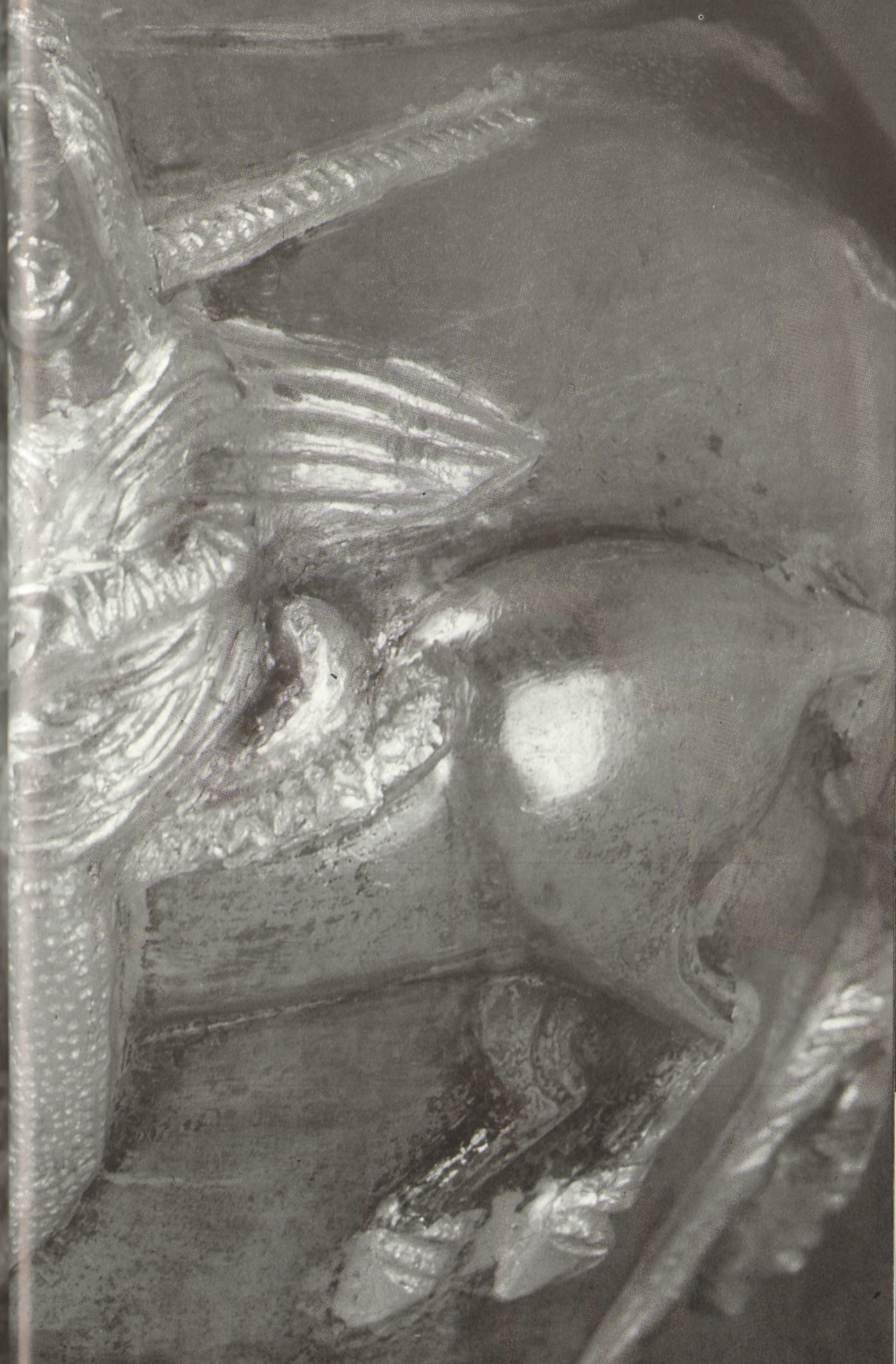
Jug No 159, detail, a boar

82

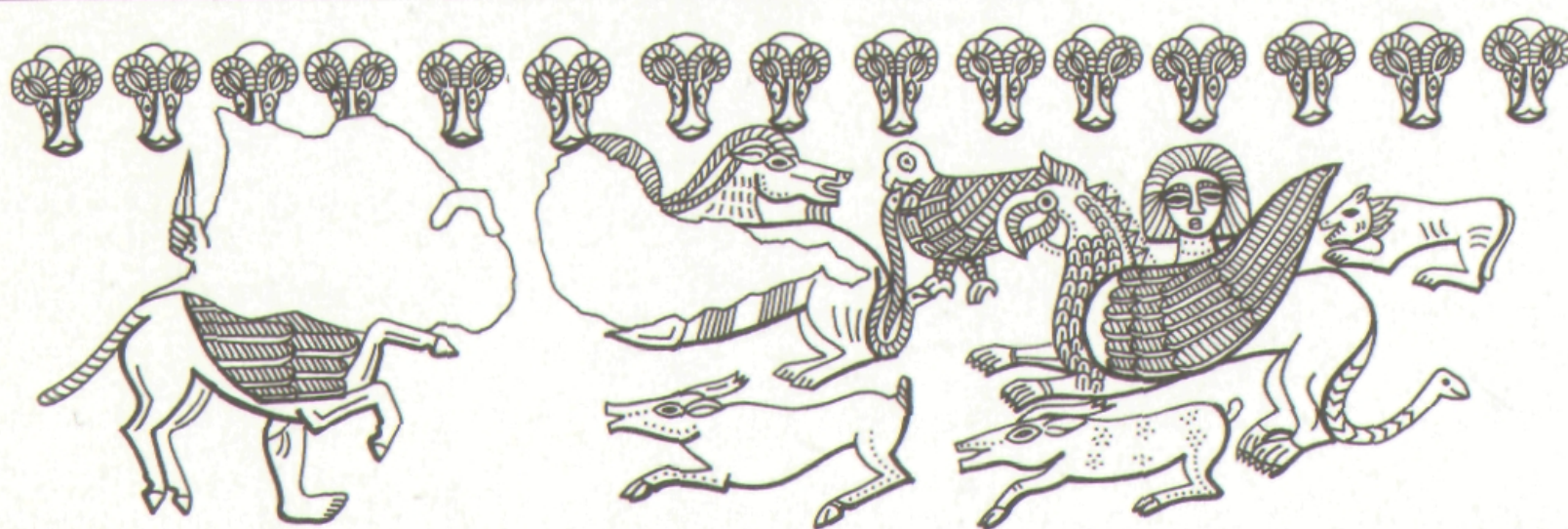
Jug No 159, detail, a mounted hunter







150



83

Jug No 162

84

The decorative strip on the jug

85

Jug No 162, detail, the hand of Bellerophon







86

Jug No 162, detail, the griffon — sphynx

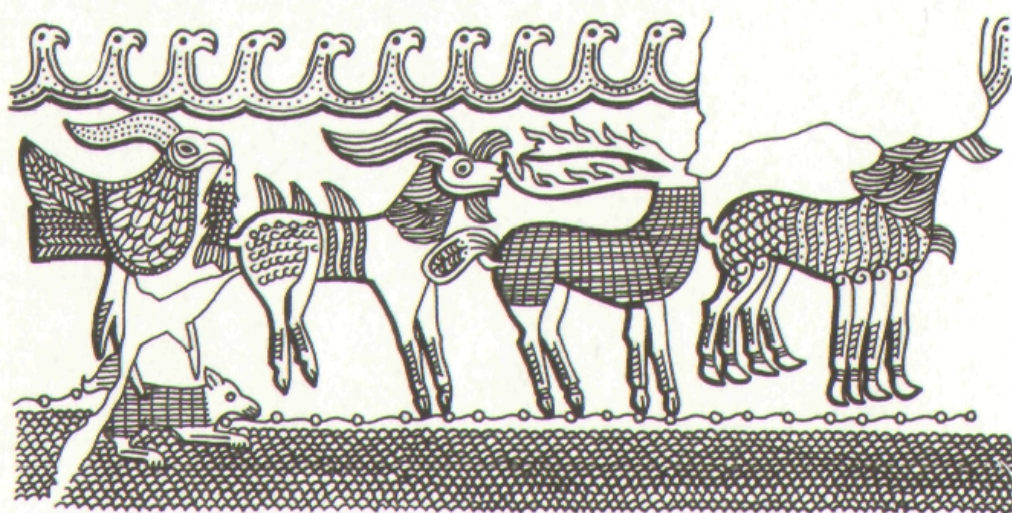
87

Jug No 162, detail





156



88

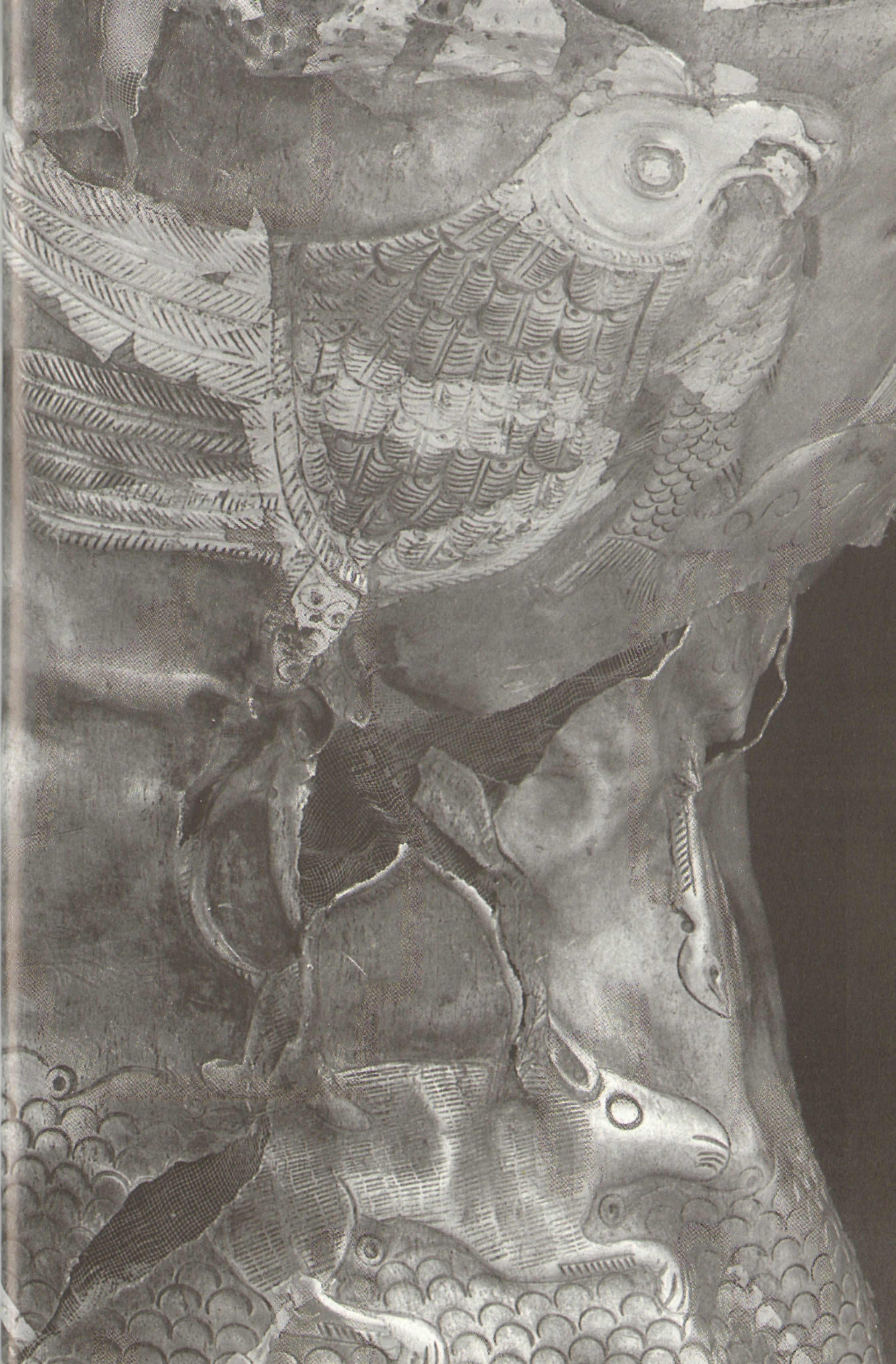
Cup No 165, the bottom

89

The decorative strip on the cup

90

Cup No 165, detail



158



91
Cup No 165, detail, the eight-legged stag-horse

92
Cup No 165, detail, the winged stag





161

ODRYSIAN
ROYAL
GIFTS

The inscriptions are perhaps the most important historical information revealed by the Rogozen treasure. Most of them follow the same formula: the name of an Odrysonian king in the genitive case, then "of" followed by the name of a town in southeastern Thrace. Ivan Venedikov suggested that the name in the genitive case belonged to some Odrysonian ruler, who was offering an inscribed phiale as a gift to another ruler to the north of the Haemus mountain. Conversely, Georgi Mihailov and Alexander Fol now postulate that the genitive case demonstrated possession, for instance Kotys' vessel; while the following place name signified the town which was offering the gift to the Odrysonian ruler. But why were all jugs supposedly given as gifts to the Odrysonian kings in southeastern Thrace found to the north of the Haemus? Is there an explanation which would combine both the above hypotheses? Each version is carefully thought but reflects only one aspect of the apparently more complex problem. 163

An important consideration is that in primitive non-literary societies like Thrace in the 4th century BC every official action was conditioned by mythology or rituals. The king's behaviour was therefore ritualized to a great extent, including the presentation and receipt of precious gifts. This does not rule out the possibility that the gifts were acts of diplomacy or a way of paying debts. There were no purely "profane" acts in primitive society; they were all performed in accordance with mythical precedent and had sacred dimensions.

The gifts were a form of exchange, a means of circulating goods, while formalizing relations in the community. According to Marcel Mauss, the gift possessed its own spirit which compelled the recipient not to keep it for a long time but to pass it on to someone else. That is why relations between the objects were actually relations between people; the object was considered to contain some of the personality of its owner; therefore, to give something was equivalent to giving part of yourself. The exchange was guaranteed by the strict obligation of giving and receiving. The exchange of gifts helped to establish friendships. On the basis of extensive ethnographic material, Mauss has proved that gifts were signs of social relations and contacts, that they embodied the idea of constant movement in society. They helped form new contacts and defined new partnerships. Life in society was thereby coded as a constant giving and receiving. Consequently, wealth had a different significance in primitive society: wealth was needed for prestige, and this prestige was earned both through the accumulation of treasures, and through their distribution, the so-called "war of wealth". That is why aristocratic exchanges were usually generous. Mauss points out that giving and receiving gifts meant not only a circulation of objects but also a circulation of personalities and rights. This strengthened the ancient hierarchy around such concepts as "honour", "respect" and "respectability". A mystic relationship was established between donor and recipient: the latter became indebted to the former. The gift acquired magic powers, reflecting social protocols and thereby assuming its own persona. This personification of social relations in the gift determined the significance of objects associated with the ritual, myth and epic poem. They often had their own names, behaviour and histories; they were represented as independent personalities. The gift was separated from the social contacts it signified and was transformed into a mythical person. This gave rise to rich folklore connected with the gift-object: it became a mediator between individuals, families, peoples and kings.

Starting with *The Iliad*, source data about Thrace contains

abundant mythological and historical (ethnographic) evidence about the role of the gift. When Priam was getting ready to go to Achilles to buy Hector's body, he prepared gifts for the Myrmidonian hero. Homer devoted special attention to these precious objects including:

"a beautiful cup given to him by the Thracians as a great gift, when he was sent to them."

When Odysseus went to the palace of the Thracian king Marron, he received splendid gifts:

"...And we supplied ourselves with a wine-skin full of precious wine: Marron, Apollo's great priest, son of Euant inhabiting the destroyed Ismaros, provided it as a noble gift, because we spared him, together with his wife and son, respecting him as a priest living in Apollo's dense forest; and he had special gifts for me: he gave me seven talents of masterfully processed gold; he also gave me a silver crater and poured twelve amphorae of wine, a precious, blended sweet beverage, a divine drink."

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Both texts reveal common "ritual" moments: gifts (valuable vessels) were given only to the most noble guests. It may be assumed that starting from the end of the Bronze Age, there was a Thracian custom for the king to give precious gifts to his noble guests, which they treasured and boasted of, giving the objects their own personalities and life stories.

This theory is based on mythology. Purely historical sources provide another explanation. Thucydides declared that among the Odrysae, gold and silver equalling the amount collected in taxes were offered as gifts, plus multicoloured and plain fabrics, and other things. Gifts were offered not only to the king, but also to lesser rulers and Odrysian nobles. In this respect they contrast with the Persian state in that they received more than they gave... This custom was generally observed by Thracians, but the Odrysae made most use of it, owing to their power. No agreements could be reached with them without gifts; this is why their kingdom was so powerful. Researchers usually accept this evidence unconditionally and often include the value of the gifts (400-500 talents annually) in the taxes. But this approach ignores the fact that the gifts never entered com-

modity circulation because they were immediately transformed into symbols, swopping their material value for prestige. They could only be exchanged for other gifts. At first glance, Xenophon's narrative, which is the main object of our analysis, supports the categorical opinion expressed by Thucydides. The rich banquet was followed by a ritual in which the guests handed gifts to the ruler: a horse, a slave, expensive clothes and a silver cup. Seuthes received everything without offering a gift in return. And even Heraclitus, the Greek who was close to the Odrysian ruler, told the guests that "according to custom, every time Seuthes invited people to dinner, they had to bring him gifts." Then Heraclitus turned to the Dardanian Thymasion, having learned that he had foreign cups and rugs... "And as soon as he (Seuthes) gains power here" Heraclitus continued, "he can send you back to your fatherland, or he can also make you rich here." He also went to Xenophon and told him: "You are from such a big city and your name is most respected by Seuthes, perhaps you would like to receive fortified residences and lands, as others of your people have received. Therefore it is worth the effort to honour Seuthes with most magnificent gifts. I am wishing you well and therefore I am persuading you to do so: because I know that the greater the gifts you offer him, the greater the gifts you will receive from him." It is clear that Seuthes did not receive these gifts ungratefully. He demonstrated his appreciation to the donors as soon as the opportunity arose; that was when he regained his father's kingdom. Heraclitus' last words reveal succinctly the nature of this exchange of gifts: the king was always obliged to give more than he received, and he was expected to offer royal gifts such as fortified residences or land. Therefore, the Odrysian rulers repaid the gifts they received with royal privileges, expressing the king's mandatory generosity.

There is written evidence about specific royal gifts. At his daughter's wedding, Kotys I gave as a dowry to his son-in-law Iphicrates: "two herds of white stud horses, a herd of goats, a gold shield, a shallow cup for drinking, a helix-shaped cup, a vessel for drinking snow water, a large

earthenware jar full of millet, an underground onion store more than twelve cubits long, and a multiple sacrifice.” Plutarch has also given us evidence about the same king: “Kotys gave a lion to a man who gave him a panther as a gift.” The exchange of gifts here is indisputable; and the Odryasian ruler gave the bigger gift in return. Plutarch narrates another similar story about this king. “When a guest once brought him easily breakable and fragile clay vessels, which were amusingly decorated with incisions and engravings, he gave gifts to his guest, but broke all the vessels himself, to avoid punishing in anger anyone else who might have broken them.” In this instance, too, the Odryasian king did not remain in debt to his guest and fulfilled the laws of exchange. This data demonstrates that treating gifts to the Odryasian rulers as a form of corruption (from the time of Thucydides to modern researchers) is not the most precise or correct interpretation of these customs. The gifts were offered by the petitioner as a guarantee that his request would be fulfilled, in the same way he or she would have given an offering to a god. Therefore, the reward for the gift would be to satisfy the gift-bearer’s request. This is particularly well expressed in Xenophon’s description. All guests offered gifts to Seuthes, but in the words of Heraclitus “the greater gifts you offer him, the greater gifts you will receive from him in return.” Abundant mythological and ethnographic evidence shows that in Thrace, too, gifts were associated with exchange, they reinforced social hierarchies within the norms described by Marcel Mauss.

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In this context, we can interpret the gifts of Kotys I, which were silver vessels inscribed with his name. As explained earlier in this chapter, the exchange of gifts was a fundamental ritual, especially in royal activities. All written sources indicate that the gift could only be received in person, because it embodied an exchange between personalities. In this sense each gift was a sign of personal contact between the donor and the recipient: both Priam and Odysseus received the magnificent gold and silver vessels from their Thracian hosts. Consequently, the gift was connected with the idea of hospitality. Contacts between the

king and his guests took place during feasts, when the guest joined the king's "table companions" for a certain time. Therefore, Kotys probably handed the rich gifts personally to his guests: rulers from the lands of the Getae, Moesians and Triballoi. This is supported by the composition of the Rogozen treasure.

168 An emblem with Apollo's image is soldered onto the centre of a phiale bearing the inscription *Kotys ex Argiske* "To Kotys from Argiske" (42). According to Ivan Venedikov the phiale should have been Kotys' gift to some Triballian ruler. However, three other phialae (99, 100 and 101) are also decorated with this image, which was hammered out using the same template. Therefore it is certain that these vessels were made in the same workshop. But how then can the presence of the three phialae and the inscribed one be explained? Why were they not designated as gifts? And another question: how did the jug bearing the inscription *Kotys Apollonos pais* "Kotys son/servant of Apollo" happen to be among them? Here the king's name is not in the genitive case, therefore the vessel was not a gift from or to Kotys. These questions prompt an elaboration of Ivan Venedikov's theory.

Assuming these gifts had political significance and that through them Kotys aimed at uniting the Thracians against the Athenians in his struggle for the Thracian Chersonesos, it is almost certain that talks must have taken place between the rulers, during which gifts were presented. How were these talks conducted? Through emissaries or by letter? Both possibilities seem unacceptable: the Thracians did not have a common written language, and the involvement of too many intermediaries in diplomatic negotiations would have resulted in information being leaked, and slowed progress. How much simpler and in keeping with the ritual tradition it would have been for the King of the Odrysae to invite other strong rulers to visit him personally. This would also have been the most natural and traditional diplomatic contact. Assuming this hypothesis is accepted, how would a ritual visit and sojourn of another Thracian ruler in the Odrysian kingdom proceed? The visitor would probably be met by Kotys in one of his

residences and talks would then be held in other fortified or sacred places in the kingdom as well. It would also be natural for Kotys to demonstrate his power to a guest he was trying to win over as an ally. Therefore, the king would include him in one of his regular tours of the kingdom. The sojourn in each residence would assume the form of a feast, a sign of peace and the most suitable occasion for concluding all sorts of treaties, and cementing friendships. According to prevailing customs, gifts were offered to the guest during the feast, perhaps after drinking a toast. But why did the name of the Odryian king appear in the inscriptions in possessive case, while the preposition preceding the name of the respective residence in southeastern Thrace suggested that the locality presented the vessel to the king?

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Arrian describes a Macedonian royal custom, according to which, a ruler who wanted to enter a city received a cup of wine at the city gates and had to use it to perform libations to the gods. This ritual had its mythical equivalent in the royal investiture: the hero who had passed the test was handed a cup as a sign of royalty. Examples are abundant both in written sources and images on Thracian relics (such as rings from Rozovets, Brezovo and Glozhené, and greave 1 from Agighiol). The cup embodied the primary royal function, that of a priest. Through this attribute the king established contact with the deity, just as the Macedonian rulers performed libations to the gods with the phiale. A similar custom probably existed among the Thracian kings as well: each time the ruler entered a residence during his regular tours, he received a precious cup, in a ritual repetition of the investiture through which the city recognized the supremacy of Kotys, Kersebleptes, and so on. This explains the different settlements which appear several times in the inscriptions: Beos, Apros, Ergiské and Geistai. However, why did all inscribed vessels appear to the north of the Haemus mountain?

This was clearly due to a secondary use of the cups Kotys or Kersebleptes received when they entered the main fortified residences in their kingdoms, accompanied by their royal guests, rulers who had come for negotiations with

the king of the Odrysaë. When he met his guests at the city gates, the king accepted the cup handed to him, and in the evening, during the feast, he offered it to his guest as a symbol of sharing his possessions with him; something like the symbolic “key” to the city gates, or granting the title “honorary citizen” of the respective settlement, and as a sign of the city itself. The inscription emphasized that the cup was the possession of the Odrysian ruler. By offering this vessel to his guest, Kotys demonstrated his readiness to part with something belonging to him, with a part of his own personality. By offering the inscribed cup bearing his name (and hence also his personality),
170 Kotys exchanged his “personality” with that of his new “brother”.

However, Kotys did not use these vessels to pay for the assistance of the Triballian King Chales who attacked Abdera in 376 BC. Their value is too little. Instead, their significance was symbolic; they were the symbol of the treaty that had been concluded, and of friendship between the rulers. But perhaps the phialae with Apollo’s image and the jug with his name reflect also some other ritual situation. The inscription on the mouth of the jug qualifies it as a ceremonial vessel in rituals to Apollo. Kotys was the main figure in the events. The jug must be associated with the three phialae with Apollo’s image in their centre forming a ceremonial set. But how did it end up in the Triballian ruler’s treasury? It is possible that through these vessels he was initiated in the mysteries of Apollo (the Orphic doctrine) by his host Kotys. If this was the case, it would be natural for the initiate to keep the tools of his mystical enrolment. An interesting fact supports this interpretation. Phiale 42 was presented to Kotys by the city of Argiske. Apollo’s image is not hammered onto the omphalos, as on the other two phialae, but was cut from a template and then stuck on to the phiale. This time Kotys apparently had reasons for asking the city to give him a special cup. Probably Apollo’s temple, one of the kingdom’s sacred places, was there. Here, too, Kotys must have been presented to his guest as Apollo’s principal priest (for example, the episode with Marron welcoming

Odysseus and his fellow-travellers in Apollo's palace-sanctuary). This set of objects also reveals Kotys as a religious teacher with respect to his guest, the material gifts merely symbolizing his personal gift — affiliating his guest with an ideological doctrine. It would be natural for Kotys (Apollo's "son", who perhaps was also the terrestrial incarnation of Orpheus), to have initiated some other ruler in the Orphic mysteries.

This gives grounds for assuming that Apollo's principal sanctuary among the Odryssae was located in Ergiské, whereas the mysterial cult of the Kabiroy was practised in Beos, according to the inscriptions on the vessels. So, the settlements mentioned in the inscriptions on the phialae and jugs were not only fortified centres of the Odryssian state, but also sacred places. We know that Thracian kings were particularly keen on possessing territories containing famous temples such as the temple of Dionysus in the Rhodopes, for which tribes often fought. Incorporating these sites within a state would raise the prestige of its ruler. Alexander the Great and Octavius, the father of Emperor Augustus went to the sanctuary of Dionysus to receive the royal prophecy. It may be assumed that initiating visiting rulers in the royal divine mysteries of the Odryssae also supplied prestige.

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Legends alone cannot provide sufficient evidence about the connection between the feast (sacrifice or religious rite) and the gift. However, Diodorus offers almost ethnographic evidence about the Thracian kings' custom to give gifts to guests. "The Thracians, after capturing Agathocles, son of Lysimachus, let him go home with many presents, partly because they wanted to guarantee for themselves a refuge against the vicissitudes of fortune, and partly because they hoped through this humane act to win back the land which Lysimachus had taken from them." "And when Lysimachus replied that... in the future he would try to be his friend and ally and repay with gratitude, so that he would not fall behind those who had done him good, Dromichaetes listened to his words benevolently, received the fortresses which had been taken from him by the military leaders of Lysimachus, and, putting a crown on

his head, sent him to his kingdom.” On both occasions Diodorus describes the same ritual situation: the king was both captive and guest; he was given a feast and released, receiving rich gifts. It may even be assumed that Lysimachus kept the valuable vessels from which he drank at the feast, because Diodorus hints that they were part of the loot which Dromichaetes took after the victory. Anyway, in both cases, a gift was expected in return for the initial offering, for instance the Getae recovered the fortresses captured by the Macedonians. The gifts therefore signify much more serious things: on the one hand, the freedom and lives of the captured Macedonian kings; on the other, the conquered lands and settlements of the Getae. This exchange became possible because the adversaries met during a feast. The feast was an alternative to killing the captives and Dromichaetes preferred it to forfeiting his troops. In this sense, the feast is regarded as the ritual answer of the choice between peace and war. And it is at this forum that Lysimachus swears that in future he will behave as a friend and ally. In that capacity he is given a crown as a gift (and perhaps also the vessels from which he drank). The situation is structurally identical to the exchange of gifts between Kotys and his Getic, Moesian and Triballian guests.

Plutarch has left an interesting example of the use of the phiale as a royal gift. “Ariston, the leader of the Paiones, killed an enemy and showed his head to Alexander, saying: ‘Your Majesty, this is rewarded in my country with a gold cup.’ Alexander smiled: ‘But with an empty one, while I shall give you a cup full of pure wine, drinking your health with it.’” This text is a direct parallel to the Scythian custom that anyone who killed an enemy and brought his scalp to the king would receive from him a cup full of wine. Alexander’s toast with the cup he presented to Ariston is equivalent to the name of the Odrysian ruler on the Thracian phialae. So, the historical evidence supports the ritual-based hypothesis that there is a connection between feast, gift, exchange, treat and investiture.

Another hypothesis can be launched along these lines. Researchers assume that the word *Disloias*, appearing on

phiale 29 of the Rogozen treasure, is the name of the artist who made the vessel, because it is followed by the verbal form *epoiese* "made". However, this verb had a wider usage and it is not always connected, especially in its mythical use, directly with manufacturing activities. In any case, in the socio-cultural context of Thracian inscribed vessels, it would be strange to place the name of a metal-worker next to that of the king for whom the cup was intended. It is highly unlikely that an artist would sign such an insignificant vessel, when real masterpieces of ancient embossed metalwork like the jugs from the Borovo treasure were left unsigned. It is much more feasible for *Disloias* to mean "one who is offering hospitality to the King". He was probably one of the magistrates of Beos, who accommodated the king's retinue and guests during their visit to the settlement. This would not have been an isolated case. Herodotus describes a similar ritual practice connected with a special privilege among the Persians. Such hospitality usually proved to be rather expensive for the recipient of the royal favour. Herodotus also narrates in detail how the inhabitants of Thasos prepared to welcome the Persian royal court; the event ruined the island financially. After the feast, the guests at the royal table took the precious vessels they had used. The situation is similar to Odrysae customs described earlier; the guests received as gifts the cups they drank from or the ones used in their initiation into the mysteries. The cup with which Disloias met Kotys in front of the city gates of Beos was also given as a gift by the Odrysian King to the Triballian ruler as a souvenir of that visit.

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The above hypothesis about the presence of Odrysian objects in the Triballoi royal treasure reconstructs rituals through which these precious vessels passed from owner to owner. The inscribed cups helped build a mythical, ritual and political picture of life in ancient Thrace.



175

HIDDEN
TO BE
FOUND

The discovery of the Rogozen treasure has again prompted the question, this time more poignantly: why were so many treasures buried in ancient Thrace? The traditional explanation that fleeing Thracian kings hid their riches from their enemies no longer seems satisfactory. Several “ritual-based” hypotheses have been proposed and another one is about to be added. 177

In my opinion, we should perceive the burying of valuable objects as a ritual connected either with the choice of a king, the renewal of the king's power or legitimizing his supremacy over some new territory. This triple reason boils down to the same thing: a peculiar form of royal investiture.

The first stage in proving this hypothesis is a comparison. Herodotus described one of the Scythian festivities, organized probably in connection with the periodic renewal of royal power. The Scythians' golden gifts fell flaming from the sky. The three sons of the first man, Targitaos, tried to approach them one by one, but only the youngest brother, Scythes, was able to make the fire subside and take the gifts. This is how the divine choice of the first Scythian king took place. Afterwards the objects were kept in the royal palace, near the fireplace of the goddess Tabiti (“the Flaming One”), equivalent to the Greek goddess Hestia. Once a year these objects were taken to the fields, and whoever fell asleep near them was chosen as the sacred king. He was given as much land as he could ride across on horseback in a single day. Then probably after his term

expired he was killed. The most interesting element in this story is the act of “falling asleep” next to the sacred objects. Since these insignia apparently belonged to Tabiti, the act represented a sacred marriage with the goddess. This secondary ritual investiture was the reverse of the first mythical one. In the first case the objects fell from the sky in flames, then they entered the palace, occupying an inside position which is particularly characteristic of Hestia-Tabiti. In the ritual the objects are taken outside, then they are apparently buried (so no one knows where they are), and their movement is upwards (they are dug out at the end of the ritual, to verify the choice of king).

178 The process of digging up the objects equates to a bride leaving her home for the wedding ceremony. Thus, the myth and the ritual have the same meaning; marriage-investiture, although they have opposite structures.

Tabiti was called “Queen of the Scythians” and oaths by the “royal Hestias” had the greatest sacred power. A written source reports that Zalmoxis, the first king of the Thracian tribe Getae, “received his laws from Hestia”. Why was it that this goddess was placed in such a supreme position in the myths, rituals and royal ideology of Scythians and Thracians?

An analysis of the significance of Hestia for the Greeks and Romans provides the answer. She was the goddess of the hearth, and its associated functions as the sacred, family, tribal and political centre of ancient society. As the centre of society, Hestia was the most stable point in the social structure. She occupied the inside position, the centre of the Greek home (the maiden’s or the bridal chamber). From an economic point of view, Hestia was the patron-goddess of the immovable property in the home. In Greece Hestia was also the guardian of the state wealth (Tamia). So, it is not strange that the pericous Scythian gifts were given and guarded by Tabiti. In mythology wealth has a sacred, rather than economic function and guarantees legitimate power. Likewise, when Aeneas moved from Troy to Italy he took the symbols of the nation’s gods (the Palladium or Penates) leaving them to be guarded in Vesta’s temple in the new land. The sacred shields on

which the Roman laws were written were also kept there. The parallels with the goddess Hestia are strong. Either as attributed objects or written texts, the insignia were always associated with law-abiding, legitimizing the land's laws and distinguishes them from other states'

Hestia had the highest virginal status in Greek and Roman mythology. This emphasized virginity corresponded to the social status of the daughter or wife as guardians of the family hearth. The goddess was also called Meter (Mother) as the Greeks viewed legitimate children as being born from the hearth. The mother was considered to be only the physical carrier, while their real birth was from Hestia.

During the rite of Amphidromia the newborn baby was carried around the hearth and the father recognized the baby as his legitimate child, because the hearth linked the family. Hestia therefore became the incarnation of legitimate inheritance, which made her a very important figure in royal ideology, as well as in myths and rituals connected with the renewal of power. Every stranger became a member of the family that had sheltered him by touching the hearth. Desecration of the hearth was one of the most serious crimes and had grave consequences for the family. This is reflected in the dynastic legend of the Macedonian home. The tale involved three brothers who went to work for the Macedonian king. But the bread intended for the youngest brother doubled in size at every meal which frightened the king. So he decided to chase the brothers away from his land, but the youngest brother, Perdikkas, asked the king to pay them for their labour. The king pointed to a ray of sunlight round the hearth and said: "Here is the pay you deserve." Perdikkas took out a knife and cut a circle round the hearth, then he scooped up the light three times and put it in his bosom. Hestia is implicitly present in this story: first, she indicated Perdikkas' mission by making his bread bigger; and second, cutting a circle round the hearth clearly indicated the severing of links with one genealogical line and beginning a new one. The myth compares to the Scythian royal legend. In summary, being the goddess of the hearth, Hestia guarded the purity of the genealogical line; she safeguarded

the legitimacy of inheritance; was the guardian and the incarnation of wealth, the source of legitimate power for the home, the state and the king; and guaranteed individual birth right. These qualities made her the principal royal deity of Thracians, Scythians and Romans. Probably she was also responsible for the choice of a new ruler, once through the laws as insignia and then through her marriage to him. To guarantee the deity free choice, the treasures had to be hidden, and only the person who "fell asleep" close to them, that is the person the goddess singled out as her husband, could become king. The Triballoi probably had a similar ceremony. This means they ritual-

180 ly buried their treasures, to be found by the worthiest among them who would then become king. There is an indirect proof of this hypothesis in writings by the ancient author Conon who states that: "Midas amassed great wealth by finding a treasure". Midas was the mythical king of the Thracian Brigae tribe, who called themselves Phrygians after they migrated to Asia Minor. His life story can be regarded as a myth about enrichment: when he was a small boy, ants put grains of wheat into his mouth while he was asleep, and later Dionysus gave him the ability to turn everything he touched into gold. These experiences motivated the great king to become rich. Treasure was a sign of power and prestige, but it also demonstrated a special benevolence on the part of the deity, because all royal insignia were made of precious materials. If Midas was to "find" the treasure, it had to be "hidden" by someone. Midas became king after this lucky find, therefore the discovery equated to a royal investiture. Conon appeared to rationalize a royal ritual like the Scythian festivities. The hidden treasure could be found only if the claimant to the throne knew the secret of the legitimate inheritance of power. Similar "secrets" occur in many dynastic myths. For example, Midas inherited from his father Gordius, the secret of the Gordian Knot, which, according to legend, opened the door to power over Asia Minor. Consequently, the treasure was hidden by the king himself and "found" by him during the ritual of power renewal.

Mythological thinking always places isolated stories in a broader context. We already know that the treasure was associated with Hestia. Being the incarnation of the family hearth, this goddess was the universally accepted pivot of the society. She is depicted centrally on a number of Greek vases. In this respect, the ritual of taking out, burying and then finding treasure can be interpreted as depriving the territory and society of their centre, as a restructuring of natural and social environments, and as sanctifying the land where the treasure was buried. Herodotus' Scythian tale of the sacred gold objects which would guarantee the new king as much land as he could cover on horseback in one day, centered this territory on the treasure's location. This meant the king rode in a circle round the royal insignia or *Tabiti*, forming a new, organized territory with a centre, designated by objects, and having precise boundaries. Civilization therefore overcame the chaos arising when the insignia left the palace and society was temporarily without a ruler. The crisis ended with the choice of a new king; the objects were found and returned to the palace, order was restored. Hestia's role in forming society and culture is also present in the Greek myth about building the first house and founding the first city. Burying the treasure actually meant implanting the royal genealogical line into a given territory. It was identical to the ritual of bringing fire from the metropolis to the new colony, a habitual practice of Greek colonists. Lighting a fire in the hearth at the new place with Hestia's fire continues the ethnic and social unity, it legitimized the right to own the new territories. It may be assumed that Thracian rulers had a similar practice when they annexed new territories: by burying part of the royal treasure, transferring the royal Hestia to the new place, they took possession of the land and turned it into their lawful property. For this reason Philip II of Macedon married the princess in the lands he conquered or was about to conquer. He also performed a symbolic marriage with Hestia of the royal home, legitimizing his claims over her land. Likewise the precious cup given as a gift at the city gates (perhaps by a maiden who is Hestia?) meant that the city recognized the ruler's rights

over it. Hence burying treasures was not an offering to some deity. The act aimed to put the treasure in its proper place, inside (in the earth), to entrust it to the care of Hestia, the patron-goddess of fair shares, lawful property and lawful inheritance. Through its permanent presence in the earth, the treasure guaranteed power over the land, legitimizing its incorporation into the overall kingdom.

Most Thracian treasures are sets. This is no accident because the cup is also a permanent feature of royal investiture. The cup (phiale, aryballos, jug or rhyton) indicates the king's sacred function and his links with the gods; it designates him as mediator between his people and the divine world. Almost every mythical Thracian ruler had teachers and instructors in royal wisdom. Zalmoxis received the "laws" from Hestia and then became the king's "counsellor"; Midas "ruled over the Brigae with great skill after listening to Orpheus' instructions on Mount Pieria"; and Orpheus received as a royal secret the mysteries of Dionysus. Therefore, knowledge of the mysteries can be considered as a form of investiture, alongside the acquisition of wealth. This double significance probably led to treasures appearing as sets: the Vulchitrun treasure, dedicated to the Great Mother-Goddess (?); the Borovo treasure dedicated to the Kabeiroi; and "Apollo's set" from Rogozen dedicated to Orpheus-Apollo. Consequently, the objects in the treasures from Thrace are an entity comprising the principal forms of investiture: wealth (Hestia); hierogamy around Hestia; offering the cup as a sign of marriage to the goddess and also of sublime knowledge and the wisdom the ruler needed for governing. These sets were possibly used in the wedding feast after the king "found" the treasure; perhaps they were also included in the ritual context of the festivities.

Most Thracian treasures were found to the north of the Haemus mountain, so the above-mentioned royal ritual can only be attributed to this area. A more typical form of investiture and power renewal in southeastern Thrace seems to have been the king receiving the royal insignia from the hands of a girl acting as Hestia. Although different, these two rites had the same participants and struc-

ture. An exchange of ideas may also have existed between the two regions of Thracian culture, because phialae inscribed by Odrysian kings have been discovered in the treasures of Triballoi and Getae. With the development of Thracian culture, local differences were gradually overcome. The Rogozen treasure is a brilliant example of the ways in which Thracian culture developed as a unified and consistent system at different levels: mythological, ritual and artistic. It offers an insight into various aspects of the religious spiritual and political life of the Thracians. In spite of the numerous studies already devoted to that treasure, we cannot claim to have exhausted the information it contains. It is certain that many researchers will “discover” the Rogozen treasure time and again and will propose their own reconstruction of a world so different to ours: the world of ancient Thrace.

The Rogozen Treasure



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